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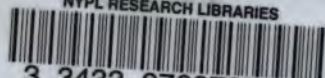
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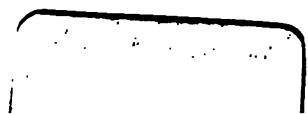


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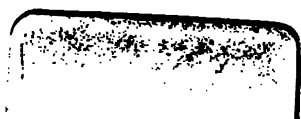
THE GORDON ELOPEMENT

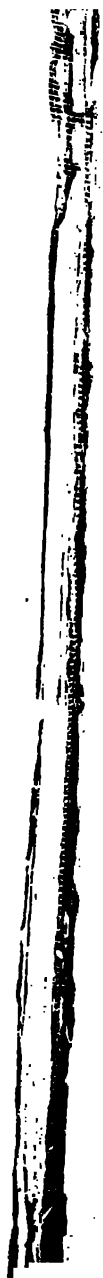


CAROLYN WELLS
HARRY P. TABER









The Gordon Elopement

The Gordon Elopement

The Story of a Short Vacation

By
CAROLYN WELLS
AND
HARRY PERSONS TABER

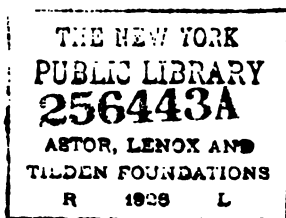
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To
Eugene Richard White

JUN 18 1926

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THE CHARACTERS

MRS. GORDON, an imposed-upon and exasperated hostess

ROBERT GORDON, her husband

ETHEL MARTIN, a young lady from Columbus, Ohio

JAMES MONTGOMERY BLACK, an admirer of Ethel's

STEWART HAVENS, another

CAPTAIN HASKINS, a retired whaler

AUNT ZIP (Mrs. Zipporah Payne), a Maine philosopher

JOSIAH QUINCY HURD, proprietor of Umbagog House

JOSEPH RODMAN PAYNE, a dog of intellect

BELLE HAMLIN and NANCY HANKS, a pair of celebrated racers



The Gordon Elopement

THE GORDON ELOPEMENT

CHAPTER I

BOB," said Grace Gordon, as she read the telegram, "I'm going to elope."

"All right, go ahead," said her husband, as he unfolded his evening paper.

Mrs. Gordon read the telegram again and then talked at, if not to, Robert, who stolidly considered the latest market reports.

"I've had company and had company and *had* company, till I feel as if another scrap of it would drive me crazy; and it's no use talking, I'm going to elope."

The methodical Robert turned to the editorial page of the *Post*, folded the paper

accurately up the centre, and carefully creased the sheet with his thumb.

"With whom?" he inquired.

"With you, goose, of course. Who did you suppose?"

"Oh!"

As no further response was forthcoming, there certainly was very little use, if any, in talking just then, but still Grace kept on.

"I suppose the palms will all die and the moths will eat up everything else, but I can't help it; human nature can't stand everything, and this is too much. There *is* a tide in the affairs of men when you get to the end of your rope—and I'm there!"

With a look of utter exasperation Mrs. Gordon read aloud the ten words on the yellow paper she held in her hand:

"Self and bride will arrive Thursday evening. Stay a fortnight.

"JACK CARPENTER."

"It does seem," she went on, "as if Jack Carpenter ought to have better sense. I think if I'd married a wife I'd look after her during my honeymoon, and not inflict myself on a third cousin—and Emily and her boys only just fairly out of the house—and Aunt Maria was here nearly all winter, down with nervous prostration, and a trained nurse. There's no company in the world so bad as a trained nurse, except brides and grooms. Oh, I think it's mean, the way people pile into this house! I haven't had a meal alone with you for more than six months, and there are lots and lots of people I ought to ask to visit me, but I don't get time because of my uninvited guests. I don't see why people want

to visit so much unless it's because they know they'll have company if they stay at home. There's only one thing to do, and I'm going to do it! Robert! *Will* you listen?"

"Yes, yes, my dear; what is it?"

"Read that!" she cried dramatically, as she thrust the telegram into his hand.

"More company is coming."

"There's no occasion to read it, my dear; if it's a telegram and says that, it probably says very little more."

"It doesn't say anything more, but that's enough. Robert, we can't stand more company. I'm exasperated beyond endurance, and I'm going to run away."

"Indeed! And when do we start?"

"Why, we start now!"

"How absurd! What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean just what I say. We're going to elope, and we start right now."

"All right. I haven't eloped often, but I'm willing to do the best I can. Where would you like to go first? Is the rope ladder ready? Is the palfrey prepared? And where's the irate parent coming in? I thought we saw him off on the *Deutschland* last week."

"No, really, Bobby, I'm serious. I've got to get away. I really can't stand Jack Carpenter and his wife, and I won't!"

"Oh, well," said Robert, laying down his paper, "if you're really serious, we'll elope, and we'll go now. I've left things at the office so that Russell can look after them, and I can write him from—but where are we going?"

"I don't care *where* we go so long as we take the first train to it."

"Then that's settled. Now let's pack—I suppose you're going to pack?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so; I hadn't thought of that."

"There's very little time," said Robert, taking a local time-table from his pocket.

"Do you suppose you could get ready in time to catch the 11:02?"

"Yes; or I could get the 10:58."

"But that goes north."

"Oh, I don't care which way it goes. I want the one that goes first."

"In that case hurry up!"

"Bob! Do you really mean it?"

"Yes, of course, bless your heart; if you want to go, we'll go."

"Anywhere, Bob?"

"Anywhere!"

"Any time?"

"Now!"

"Bob, you're a *dear*!"

Then Mrs. Gordon ran away. Robert, left to himself, began to think things

over. What had he done? What had he promised to do? What was the outcome to be?

But all that didn't make any difference. Grace wanted to do things and he was ready to do them. He went upstairs with the air of a joyful Galahad, but it was with the spirit of Bob Acres that he began uncertainly to pack the few things he thought he might need.

Meanwhile, Grace went about the packing of white petticoats, shirtwaists, slippers, hats, and finally two tack hammers.

"Because," as she called out to Robert, "you never can find a tack hammer when you want it."

"Of course," he called back; "we may have to tack down some parlour carpets or something."

"Yes, of course, we may—goodness!

It's a quarter of eleven now. 'Most ready, Bob?"

"All ready, Grace!"

"Come on, then!"

Like two culprits they groped together down the dark front stairs, and pausing in the hall Grace whispered excitedly:

"What about the trunk?"

"Bless my soul, Grace; have you got a trunk?"

"Of course! What did you think my things were in?"

"Well, that means a hackman, that's all, and we must telephone for one."

"Oh, Bob, we can't! Nora will hear us."

"Nonsense; she's asleep long ago."

"Oh, of course she is. Well, go ahead."

Robert went to the telephone and, for safety's sake, holding his hand over the bell, called a cab.

"Robert," said Grace, clutching him in the dark, "isn't it fun!"

Then the cabman came and Robert softly opened the front door.

"Be quiet," he said cautiously; "there's a sick lady in the room above. Just bring that trunk down as carefully as you can and get it over to the station, quick."

"Do you want it checked, sir?"

"Never mind that. Get it over there and we'll be there."

"Yes, sir."

Robert Gordon locked his own street door feeling that he had burned his bridges behind him and that he neither knew nor cared what was to happen next.

As they turned toward the station Grace said, "But, Robert, where are we going?"

"To the first train."

"The 10:58?"

"That's the first, isn't it?"

They reached the station just in time to get comfortably aboard the train, which rolled northward through the night.

The Gordon elopement had begun.

CHAPTER II

AS THEY passed the lights of Fanwood Robert said: "I hope Nichols isn't on this train to-night."

"Who's Nichols?" asked Grace.

"The conductor. Don't you know Nichols? Why, he knows every commuter on this road. He knows what their business is and what time they are due at the office, and if he sees me on this train he'll ask me why."

On hearing this the man two seats back concluded that his first impression had been correct, and that this was an eloping couple. At first he had thought that there was something mysterious about them from the furtive

manner in which they entered the car. But when he observed the careless way in which the young lady's jacket was tossed up into the rack he felt sure that the man who did it was no eloping lover. The overheard bit of conversation, however, revived his first impression, and he awaited with some interest the arrival of the conductor. He was conscious of a distinct feeling of annoyance when the blue-coated official appeared and it was not Nichols.

But the man behind was destined never to know the truth of his impressions, for he left the train at Elizabeth with the mystery still unsolved, but with a good story to take home to his wife concerning a runaway couple.

It was one o'clock when the Gordons reached the New York side. The solitary cabman seemed to have been waiting

for them all through the evening, and Robert felt that a kind fate was watching over them. All through the journey on the train he had wondered what was to be done next, and when the cabman cried, "Hotel, sir!" he came to a realising sense of his absolute inability to decide what was to be done next.

"Certainly," he said. "Certainly we must have a hotel."

"Step right in," said the cabman.

Their bags were placed on top alongside the driver and they rattled off over the cobble-stone pavement which is the glory of New York's water-front.

Up through West Street, through Bleecker, across Washington Square they drove, and up Fifth Avenue.

In the White Light District the lights were for the most part extinguished, for it was late—even for New York. On

through Union and Madison Squares the cab rolled—on up the avenue. Here and there belated travellers glanced at the woman in the cab. Grace shrank back in the corner. “Bobby,” she said, “where are we going?”

“I don’t know,” said Robert.

“Why, we’re away up past Ninetieth Street.”

Robert called to the cabman.

“Where are you taking us?” he asked.

“To Westchester,” replied the cabman.

“I think we’ve gone about far enough in this direction. Please turn back and drive us to the Holland House.”

“Yes, sir!”

.

At breakfast next morning Grace asked:

“What time does the train start, Robert?”

“Which train?”

"Why, the train we're going on, of course."

"Do you know where we're going?"

"Why, certainly I do."

"Where?"

"Well, we must go up to the station, and you must buy tickets for the place where the last man ahead of you bought them for."

"Your method of procedure is as involved as your grammar, but if that's what we're to do, come on. Let's do it."

The line of ticket-buyers was not very long, but as Robert attempted to take his place at the end of it Grace dragged at his coat sleeve, whispering: "Not there! Wait a minute!"

"But you told me to get at the end of the line," said Robert.

"Yes, but not there. Wait until that

big man with the pearl gloves takes his place, and then get behind him. I like him."

"You do? I'll get him for you."

"No, you needn't; but get the same kind of ticket that he does."

"All right."

Following the big man, Robert heard him say: "Rumford Falls."

"Two for Rumford Falls," said Robert a moment later.

"Did you get them?" asked Grace, as Robert came toward her.

Robert handed her the tickets. "Rumford Falls!" she exclaimed. "Where's Rumford Falls?"

"How do I know? Ask your big man with the pearl gloves. He's responsible for Rumford Falls."

"Well, that's where we're going, anyway."

"Yes, that's where we're going. We'll be in Boston this afternoon and we won't reach the Maine woods till to-morrow—late."

"What's Rumford Falls like? Have you ever been there?"

"Yes, I've been there. It's no sort of a place. Just paper mills and spruce trees."

"What made you get tickets for a place like that?"

"Queen's orders, my lady. Here we are—that's our train."

In Boston that evening at their hotel they met Tom Armstrong, a neighbour of theirs at home. "What are you doing here in Boston?" he asked.

"Oh, I just ran over on business for the day. We are on our way to——"

"Montreal," said Grace.

"Good," said Armstrong. "I have just

come down from there and I will give you a note to a chap who will put you up at his club and give you no end of good fun."

"What about me? Is there a woman's club?" asked Grace.

"Yes, of course there is. When are you going up?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Grace airily.

"We may be here two or three days."

"I wish I could stay over, but I've got to go back to New York to-night. Any message to send home?"

"No; nothing special. We'll be back in a few days." And much to Robert's relief Armstrong left them.

"Why did you say we were going to Montreal?" asked Robert.

"Why not?" said Grace.

CHAPTER III

IT WAS about three o'clock on Thursday afternoon when the Gordons reached Rumford Falls. To him who is familiar with the railroad stations of Maine this particular one is not different from the others. There is a long, low, rakish craft of a building which does duty as a freight-shed and a waiting-room. There is a platform which is made of planks. The planks have seen better days, and, being of elm, spruce and pine hopelessly intermingled, they turn up at the ends and buckle up in the middle, presenting stumbling-blocks for the feet of the unwary. The Maine station platform is a warped affair. The one at Rumford was no

exception, and when the Gordons climbed down from the car in which they had travelled from Portland, Robert remarked that the station platform looked as if there were a heavy sea running. "I wonder if there is a boatman hereabouts?" he inquired of Grace.

"There's a barge that looks as though it might belong to a hotel," she said.

"Please do not jest upon such serious subjects," said Robert. "It is bad enough as it is. Ho! ferryman!" he called to the man who stood beside the horses.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The man who responded to Robert's call was short, thick, broad, very brown as to his whiskers, and very stolid as to his appearance. His eyes were deep set, and over them there were bunches of bushy hair. Straggling from beneath a weather-beaten sou'wester came locks of faded

gray hair that threatened to curl at the ends. His clothing matched his hair. He wore no coat or waistcoat. His trousers were of oilskin, and were held in place by a belt with a buckle showing the eagle and the stars—such a belt as was worn by the soldiers when they went to war.

“Where ye bound?” he asked.

“We are looking for a hotel,” said Robert. “Is there one here?”

“Not exactly as ye might say *here*, but there’s one up th’ ro-ad a piece.”

“Good hotel?”

“Best in Maine.”

“Then we’ll go there. Will you take us?”

“That’s what I’m here for.”

Grace’s trunk was strapped on the back of the barge. The Gordons climbed in, Robert on the seat with the driver and

Grace on the seat behind. They started out from the station and drove through the main street of the little village. On the bank of the river stood a great factory. "What do they make in that place?" asked Robert.

"Paper," said the driver.

"Much manufacturin' here?"

"Some."

"What is the chief industry?"

"Paper."

"Do they make much of it?"

"They don't do nothin' else."

So they drove on through the town and out into a woodland road that seemed to plunge into a forest which grew deeper and darker as they went on.

"Is the hotel very far away?" asked Robert.

"Quite a piece," said the driver.

"Oh," said Grace, "what a long, rough

road! Shall we get there before dark, Mr.——”

“Haskins; Cap’n Haskins; schooner *Sally*, whaler out o’ Nantucket.”

“Why did you give up whaling?” inquired Robert.

“Whale bit my leg off,” said Cap’n Haskins.

For three hours they drove through alternate wood and clearing. To Grace the time seemed interminable, but when they finally came into a clearing larger than the rest and she saw before her a theatrical sort of lake, glimmering under the setting sun and bordered by the shadows of great pines and spruces, she was satisfied and she exclaimed in delight at the scene before her. Standing well back from the lake, set in a lawn of brilliant green, and surrounded by masses of spring flowers, was a great hotel. The broad

verandas seemed to give welcome. The large windows gave promise of light and airy rooms. The whole aspect of the place suggested more and better comfort than is usually found in summer hotels.

"What a beautiful spot!" cried Grace. "I didn't think we were coming to such a tremendous hotel."

"How many guests does it accommodate?" asked Robert.

"'Bout eight hundred," replied Cap'n Haskins.

"Oh, I wish we hadn't come," said Grace. "How can we go into a hotel like that with only one trunk?"

"It doesn't look like a one-trunk hotel," said Robert, "but you would come here."

"And I'm glad I did," said Grace.

Cap'n Haskins drove up to the entrance with a flourish. Two porters in uniform came out to fetch in the trunk. A boy

with shining buttons came to take the smaller luggage.

Robert, not sharing Grace's feeling of embarrassment, walked boldly up to the desk. The clerk turned the register toward him and handed him the pen. Robert looked over the register. "What day is this?" he asked.

"Thursday, the 18th of July," said the clerk.

Robert turned back the leaf. The last entry was under date of May 29th, and the name was that of the president of the Foxboro, Umbagog and Pacific Railroad Company.

Surprised, but making no remark, Robert registered. "Can you give us rooms facing the lake?" he asked.

"I can give you two pleasant ones on the second floor."

"That will do," said Robert.

Alone in their rooms, Grace said to Robert: "Does it seem strange to you that we haven't seen any one about?"

"Why, there were a lot of people in the halls."

"Yes, bellboys and things; but I mean guests."

"Weren't there any? Well, you'll see plenty later. I suppose I've got to dress up for dinner."

"Why, of course. I won't go down with you if you don't."

They went down to the dining-room and were shown to a table near a window overlooking the lake. "This is very delightful," said Grace, "but how strange that nobody else is down yet."

"Yes, they seem to dine very late for summer hotel guests. It's after eight now."

The dinner was perfectly appointed and carefully served.

"Aren't you glad we came?" exclaimed Grace, looking with satisfaction out over the lake.

"Yes; but where do you suppose all the people are?"

"Never mind the people. Just look at that moon rippling the lake with silver."

"Yes, it's great; but look at this room full of tables, loaded with flowers, and waiters, and nobody eating but us."

"It is funny," said Grace; "what do you suppose it means?"

"It either means that the guests have all left or that they haven't come yet."

"But it's too early in the season for them to have left, and too late for them to haven't come."

Leaving the dining-room, the Gordons went out on the veranda. Again Grace

exclaimed at the beauty of her surroundings, and again Robert expressed surprise at the vacant veranda chairs and empty hammocks, the unused boats, and the deserted paths.

“It’s weird,” said Grace, with a shiver.

“It’s worse than that,” said Robert; “it’s confounded queer, and I don’t understand it!”

•

CHAPTER IV

STEWART HAVENS, of Belknap, Harrington & Havens, sat in his office in Pine Street wondering if he were to get any vacation during the summer. To him came Roger Thompson, vice-president of the Frontier Paper Company, who explained that his company had become possessed of a great amount of land in the spruce country of Maine.

"I am very glad," said Stewart; "shall you make a great deal of money out of it?"

"That's just what I want to know," replied Mr. Thompson. "You see, there are some people besides ourselves who have a claim on the property, and that

is why I've come to tell you about it."

"Oh!" said Stewart; "a case for us?"

"Well, it's a case for the firm, if you like, but I'd rather you'd handle it alone, if it's all the same to you. You see, it is the sort of deal that we don't want too many people to know about. It is one which is a little bit out of the ordinary, and if we can keep it all in one man's hand, then—— Well, you see, we don't want too many people mixed up in the case—that's all."

"Then I understand," said Stewart, "that you want me to find out whether you are really possessed of the land or not?"

"Well, there are two or three people who know about it. One of them is a chap named Hurd, who's running a summer hotel up in Maine—right in the

middle of our spruce lands. Another is the attorney for the Foxboro, Umbagog and Pacific Railroad—which runs through the property—and still another is a young lawyer named Gordon, who lives over in Jersey somewhere.”

“Then you want me to see all these people?”

“Oh, I don’t know that it is necessary to see all of them, but we’ll have to see one or two of them, anyway.”

After further discussion of the subject, it was arranged that Stewart should take up the case for the Frontier Paper Company, and that he should get an interview as soon as possible with the New Jersey lawyer.

And that’s how it happened that Stewart Havens found himself on Robert Gordon’s doorstep the day after the elopement.

"Is Mr. Gordon at home?" he asked of the maid.

"No, sir; but Mr. Carpenter is in."

"Then I will see him," said Stewart.

Shown into the library, Stewart Havens saw a young woman pouring alcohol into a chafing-dish lamp.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, looking up at him. Meanwhile she continued to pour the alcohol from the flask some time after the lamp had overflowed.

"Let me take it," said Stewart.

"Oh, thank you, if you only would," she said, resigning the dripping affair to him; "these ridiculous wickless gauze-wire things always act like that. I'm so glad you came just as you did."

"So am I. Am I speaking to Mrs. Gordon?"

"Oh, no. I'm not Mrs. Gordon. I'm Mrs. Carpenter—Mrs. Jack Carpenter."

"I am Stewart Havens, and I want to see Mr. Robert Gordon on business."

"Oh, well, he isn't at home. We're living here now, Jack and I—that is, Mr. Carpenter; we're staying here, you know."

"Ah!" said Stewart, bowing gravely.

"But if you'd like to see my husband——"

"Not at all. I merely wanted to see Mr. Gordon on a business matter. Mayn't I help you with that lamp again?"

"Thanks, so much—if you'll light it, please."

Stewart lighted the lamp and adjusted it under the chafing-dish.

"I hope it will boil soon," said Mrs. Carpenter, lifting the lid and showing, to Stewart's surprise, a chafing-dish filled with clear water.

"You see," she explained, "I'm making

afternoon tea, and I can't find Mrs. Gordon's tea-kettle—though I suppose she must have one somewhere, but I've found these beautiful cups in the cabinet—indeed, that's what made me think of having tea."

"They are great," said Stewart, lifting the Spode cups with the gentle touch of the connoisseur.

"Yes. I dare say they're heirlooms," said Mrs. Carpenter, moving them about carelessly. "I hope you'll stay and drink tea from them with us."

"Thank you," said Stewart.

"I say, Katherine," said Jack Carpenter, appearing from the dining-room with a knife and a lemon, "are these the things you said you wanted to make tea with?"

"Yes, thank you," said Katherine. "Jack, this is Mr. Havens, who has come

down from New York to see Mr. Gordon, and he's staying to tea with us."

"That's good," said Jack cordially. "We're host and hostess here at present."

"And Mr. Gordon is away?" asked Stewart.

"Yes, he's out of town," said Jack confidently. "He went away yesterday."

"And when will he return?"

"Next week, I think. Probably Tuesday?" looking inquiringly at Mrs. Carpenter.

"Yes, Tuesday or Wednesday," said Katherine airily. "I doubt if they can get back before Wednesday."

"Ah, then you can give me his address," said Stewart. "I am very glad. I am most anxious to have it."

"Ah, yes, certainly," said Jack, fumbling in his pocket. "Where could I have put that address?"

"Why, Jack Carpenter!" said his wife, "what are you talking about? You haven't the faintest idea where they are, and you know it!"

"No more I haven't," said Carpenter, laughing frankly. "You see, it was this way. We came here to visit my cousin, Mrs. Gordon. We arrived this morning and found no one at home, so we've taken possession. We don't know where they are, but we're very comfortable, and I think we'll stay till they get home. I hope they'll come soon, for they're so anxious to see us. They're the most hospitable people—always having company."

"Strange, then," said Stewart, "that they should have gone away just as you came, and it's a bit mysterious, too, that Russell doesn't know where Gordon is."

"It's very mysterious," broke in Mrs.

Carpenter. "Even the maids don't know where they are."

"It is queer," admitted Stewart. "I telephoned to Mr. Gordon's office this morning, and his partner, Mr. Russell, said that he had not come in yet, and when he didn't come before ten o'clock he usually didn't come for the day. That's the reason I came over here. But Mr. Russell didn't say anything about Mr. Gordon's having gone away for any length of time."

"Well, then, it must be that they're coming back soon," said Mrs. Carpenter. "Do you suppose, Jack, that they got our telegram before they left?"

"Sure," said Jack; "it was open on the library table when we came in."

"*That* couldn't have been the reason for their going," said Mrs. Jack, dimpling as she passed the tea-cups.

"Hardly," said Stewart, looking at Mrs. Carpenter, quite convinced that no one could be induced to leave home knowing that such a fascinating young woman was about to arrive.

"But the queerest thing to me," went on Mrs. Jack, "is that Mrs. Gordon took all her best clothes in her trunk—Nora said so—and they went away in the middle of the night and never said a word to any one."

"Then how did Nora know?" asked Jack.

"Why, when she came down this morning they were gone, and all Mrs. Gordon's jewelry has gone, and the trunks—and everything."

"Didn't Nora suspect burglars?" asked Stewart.

"Oh, burglars don't take things off in trunks," said Mrs. Jack.

"They're not apt to steal a big man like Robert Gordon, either!" said Jack.

"No," said Stewart, "but it is strange, and I must find Gordon."

"Well, I can't help you," said Jack Carpenter cheerfully. "I wish I could."

"I wish so too," said Stewart, "for it's really an important matter, and it is as much in Gordon's interest as in my own that I wish to find him."

"I hope you'll find him," said Carpenter, "but I confess that I think the whole business is queer."

"Queer?" said Katherine. "It's more than queer. It's a perfect mystery."

CHAPTER V

THE morning after the arrival of Grace and Robert Gordon at Umbagog House they walked down the path to the lake, still wondering at the inexplicable state of things in the hotel.

"It wouldn't be so strange," Grace said, "if there were just a few people about, but an immense hotel, in such perfect working order, and no guests, is the very weirdest thing I ever saw. Do you suppose, Robert, that there was an epidemic of some sort and they all fled for their lives?"

"Hardly that, I think; but it is a mighty curious thing that we haven't seen one of our fellow guests; nobody in the dining-

room at breakfast except ourselves. Wonder if they're all crazy and locked in their rooms?"

"Oh, Bob, you don't think this is an insane asylum, do you?"

"Well, it looks a little like it. Hello! Where'd the dog come from?"

They stood and watched a big dog that swaggered by with an assumed air of indifference, and as he passed them they heard some one call: "Joseph, come here!"

Joseph walked slowly on. He did not bound to meet his mistress. He walked sidewise, looking off over the lake as though he were thinking deeply.

Joseph was a personage. He was a dog of parts. Long, narrow, and black, with eyes that by long association with Aunt Zip had taken on something of her sharpness of vision, he seemed to know things, and he not only seemed to know

them, but he did know them, and he was used to tell Aunt Zip what he knew in a series of staccato barks, accompanied by melodic waggings of a tail which had met with an accident in his puppy days and had remained permanently crooked.

Grace leaned farther over the hedge and they watched the dog as he poked his nose around the corner of the veranda where Aunt Zip was watering her geraniums. Seeing her, Joseph stopped and peered tentatively. Aunt Zip saw him.

"Joseph Rodman Payne," she began severely—"Joseph Rodman Payne, you come here this minute. What have you been a-doin'?"

Joseph's wandering mind came back to mundane things. With an audible sigh he faced Mrs. Payne.

"Joseph," she repeated, "what have you been a-doin'? Ain't you ashamed of

yourself, a great big dog like you, goin' off chasin' after dogs that ain't kin to you? Where's your bringin' up? How many times have I got to tell you that mornin's I want you to set right here and see to them chickens? Just look at 'em now, clawin' up them tomato-plants that Josiah Quincy's hired man had so much trouble a-plantin'. Just you look at 'em! You needn't tell me," she went on, as Joseph entered a plea of goodness by a tentative promise with his tail—"you needn't tell me that you ain't been chasin' that dog that was around here yesterday. You needn't do it. I know, 'cause if you had been tendin' to business you'd have had them chickens out of that garden long and long ago. How many times have I got to tell you about Susy?"

Here Grace became so much interested that she crept through the gate of

the garden hedge hoping to command a view of the speaker without herself being seen.

Robert followed and saw on the veranda a large woman of the type known as "comfortable looking." He felt sure that he must call her "Aunt" if he spoke to her.

Looking over her spectacles at the dog, who had settled himself with a resigned expression, knowing that a tirade would follow, Aunt Zip continued:

"Didn't I tell you about Susy when you was a little bit of a puppy? Didn't I tell you how she was a hen that never amounted to nothin' at all? She was just the same sort of a hen as you are—she never could keep her mind sot on nothin'. She was industrious enough when it come to layin', and she laid ten of the nicest Plymouth Rock eggs you

ever saw, and then she decided she wanted to set.

“Well, she began all right enough, but the strain was too much for her weak mind. She just had to go off and tell the other hens about the ten chickens she was goin’ to have come the 5th of June. Well, while she was off tellin’ what she was *goin’* to do, them eggs all got cold and every single blessed one of ’em got chilled and spoiled; they wasn’t no use, even for scramblin’ for the boarders, and I threw ’em all into the lake. I argued a lot with Susy, but it didn’t do any good. She couldn’t keep her mind on her business, and I had to get Cap’n Haskins to chop her head off, and I cooked her for dinner.”

Finding that his mistress’s lecture promised to be longer than he anticipated, Joseph stretched himself, yawned, lay

down with his head on his paws, and listened with apparent attention.

“I know you feel bad about it, Joseph,” she went on; “I know you feel bad, and you’re a-promisin’ now that you won’t ever do it again, but you just see what comes when a hen don’t keep her mind on her business. Hens ain’t so much different from dogs, I guess, and dogs ain’t so much different from folks—not particular different—and unless you want your head chopped off and get boiled, why, you just go on chasin’ after strange dogs and neglect your business. Now you go right out to that garden and you set there and watch them chickens.”

Joseph bounded off to the garden, letting off yelps to terrify the predatory chickens. Aunt Zip went on watering her geraniums. “Hens and dogs and folks are pretty much alike,” she said.

Cap'n Haskins came up from the stable yard, marking time with his uneven gait to the deep-sea chantey that one might hear off Madagascar or in the far North Pacific, but which seemed strangely unfamiliar when it was whistled along the shore of the peacefulest of Maine lakes.

Grace saw him from her hiding-place behind the hedge and stepped out. Robert followed. Joseph, the big Newfoundland, came in from the garden. The chickens scurried away toward the barnyards. Aunt Zip set down the watering-pot and wiped her hands on her apron. Cap'n Haskins stopped whistling. Nobody spoke, and the silence became oppressive.

"Good morning, Cap'n Haskins," said Robert at last. "I was just coming to look for you. We want to go driving this morning. Can you give us a horse?"

"I can let you have a team."

"Oh, we don't want two horses," said Grace.

"I didn't say anythin' about two horses," growled Cap'n Haskins.

"Why, you said a team, and that certainly means two horses."

"Not in Maine," said the Captain.

"Well, call it what you like; we want to go driving," said Robert; "that is, unless all your teams are in use. Have the other guests of the hotel engaged them all?"

For a moment the Captain looked as if he were going to smile. "No," he said. "I guess there's one that ain't engaged; you can have that."

"Goin' to be gone all day?" inquired Aunt Zip cordially. "If you are, you'll need some lunch."

"Thank you," said Grace; "that will be lovely."

And this was the Gordons' introduction to Mrs. Zipporah Payne, sister of Josiah Quincy Hurd, proprietor of Umbagog House.

When Cap'n Haskins returned with the "team," the head waiter appeared bearing a basket, which Aunt Zip directed him to place carefully under the seat of the buckboard.

"Have any of the other ladies from the hotel gone driving to-day?" asked Grace.

Aunt Zip smiled. "I don't think many of them have gone out yet," she said.

The Gordons drove away.

"We didn't find out much from the old lady, did we?" said Robert.

"No," said Grace, "but if I don't find out something about it pretty soon I shall send for a detective."

"Do!" said Robert.

CHAPTER VI

THE Gordons drove down through the wood. There was but one road. Seemingly it began nowhere and ended at the lake, but as a matter of fact it began about where the railroad ended, wandered aimlessly along the lake, took a turn off toward the north, and finally brought the traveller who followed it to the very foot of Mount Katahdin. But the Gordons did not drive toward the mountain. They let the "team" take its course, and the old horse, which for years had known the road, took his way again toward the railroad station twelve miles away. Having never been in the other direction, he knew no other path.

When they came in sight of the station Grace exclaimed: "Why, there's a lady sitting on the platform!"

At the same moment the girl sprang up and ran toward the carriage. "Will you please tell me where I am?" she said. "I'm lost."

"Loved and lost?" asked Robert.

"Yes," said the young lady cheerfully, "that's exactly what I am."

As Grace noted the dark blue tailor-made suit and correct hat of the young woman, and observed her frank gray eyes, she instinctively liked her.

"Are you from the Umbagog?" Grace asked.

"I don't know what Umbagog is, but I'm not from it; I'm from Columbus."

"Ohio?" asked Robert.

"Yes; there isn't any other. And," turning to Grace, "I got on the wrong

train, and there isn't any train back till to-morrow, and whatever *am* I to do?"

"You poor child," said Grace; "jump in and go back with us."

"Oh, do you live here?"

"Well, no, not exactly; that is, I don't know," said Grace.

"You see," said Robert, "we've just eloped."

"Gorgeous!" said the girl.

"Well," said Grace, "we didn't really elope—that is, we did *elope*, but we've been married for years."

"Oh!" said the young lady.

"And," continued Grace, "we're up at the hotel, and you can just as well go back with us and stay over night and join your people to-morrow, for there's no other train to-day."

"But," said the girl, "my trunks aren't here, and I've only this frock."

"That won't matter," said Grace, "at our hotel. It's the funniest thing, but there doesn't seem to be anybody there but ourselves."

"Oh, if it's just your own cottage, I don't mind. You see, my trunks were checked through, but I got on the wrong train at Portland. I have telegraphed my people, so they understand the situation, and I'm awfully glad you turned up just as you did or I don't know what I should have done."

"And I'm awfully glad to have found you," said Grace, "for there's no other woman at the hotel."

"What!"

"No; and no other men, either."

"Well, you are the most mysterious people. Please tell me what you're talking about."

"We don't quite know, ourselves," said

Grace. "We are mysterious. Everything up here is. You are."

"Oh, no, I'm not," said the girl, laughing. "I'm Ethel H. Martin, the daughter of John Martin, vice-president and general manager of the Columbus Fuel and Iron Company. I have been visiting some relatives down at Cumberland, and I was to meet Mrs. Matthews—that's papa's sister—and her two daughters and go on with them to Campobello. I was to meet them in Portland, but I seem to have got on the wrong train, for this isn't Portland."

"Your train must have been going the wrong way," said Robert; "Portland is at the other end of this railroad."

"Yes, I know it now," said Miss Martin; "and I must go back there to-morrow."

"I really wish you needn't go back

to-morrow," said Grace. "I wish you could stay with us."

"I should certainly love to do it," said Miss Martin, "but I've telegraphed to the people, and they will expect me to-morrow night."

"Telegraph them again," said Robert.

"I suppose I could. I'd like to stay. Is the hotel nice?"

"Lovely," said Grace, smiling.

"And are the people nice? As nice as you are?"

"Wait till you see them," said Grace.

"Shall I have to wait long? Is it much farther? We've gone miles already."

Then, as they emerged from the shadow of the wood, the lake spreading before them, and the hotel white and shining against the background of the spruce trees, Ethel exclaimed: "Jimminy! but

that's a beautiful place! Is that where you live?"

"Behold our castle!" said Robert.

"That's a pretty big castle for two people," remarked Ethel.

"If you stay, there'll be three of us," said Robert.

"Oh, do stay!" exclaimed Grace.

"Do you really mean to tell me that you two people are the only ones in that tremendous great big building?" asked Miss Martin.

"Oh, no," answered Robert; "there's Aunt Zip, and Cap'n Haskins, and Joseph, and the head waiter, and about four hundred other waiters and bell-boys—and we suppose there is a proprietor, but we haven't seen him yet."

"And are you really the only guests?" said Ethel.

"So far as we know, we are," said

Robert. "We haven't seen another living soul about the hotel—that is, nobody who could be called a guest."

Robert drove up to the hotel. From the stable-yard appeared Cap'n Haskins, followed by Joseph, calm now, clothed in his right mind because the chickens were locked up for the afternoon and Aunt Zip was more tractable. Aunt Zip came out to the veranda, and with her was a round man, florid, gray-eyed, and very smooth. This was the impression he made on both Ethel and Grace, for they talked him over afterward.

Josiah Quincy Hurd rubbed his hands together. "Dee-lighted," he said; "dee-lighted!" and the proprietor of Umbagog House disappeared as suddenly as he had come, and his guests saw him no more that day.

"What was he so delighted about?"

asked Ethel, who didn't quite understand what it all meant.

"If he's as glad to see another guest as we are," said Robert, "I should think he would be delighted."

Cap'n Haskins took Robert's horse to the stable. At the top of the steps which led up to the veranda stood Aunt Zip; beside her stood Joseph, wagging an approving but exceedingly crooked tail.

Aunt Zip, too, smiled approvingly. Ethel Martin felt that she had been taken into the family. That was the kind of a smile Aunt Zip had.

Ethel went to the desk, and the clerk gave her the register with great dignity. Mrs. Gordon stood beside her as a sort of an outward and visible sign of a particularly respectable chaperone.

When Grace was dressed for dinner,

Ethel came to her room. "There's a mystery about this place," she said.

"That's what I thought," said Grace.

"Let's find out what it is," said Ethel.

"Let's," said Grace.

CHAPTER VII

As HE had done every day since the hotel opened, Cap'n Haskins drove down to the station the next morning. Rarely before had he found anybody waiting for the barge, but this time on the station platform stood a young man. Beside him there was a steamer trunk, and, by a leash tied to the trunk-handle, there was a bull terrier couchant, regardant.

Cap'n Haskins was immediately belligerent. For weeks he had been meeting the train every day, and there had been nothing to take back to the hotel except the Gordons and the trunk which they had brought. This trunk he had made the combination station-agent, telegraph

operator and signal-man load into the rack of the barge, "because," as he explained, his "sta'bod leg was out o' commission, an' th' port hoss wouldn't sail any too cluss to th' wind."

And now he was confronted by a passenger with a particularly truculent trunk, and a dog which, although he had worn the blue ribbon of the Kennel Club, was yet to pass through the ordeal of a meeting with Joseph; and Cap'n Haskins knew from bitter experience what that meant.

Stewart Havens recognised in the weather-beaten face of Cap'n Haskins the spirit of a man who expected submission and was not often disappointed.

"Are you going to the hotel?" asked Havens respectfully.

"I cert'nly be."

"Will you take me with you?"

"This here barge is goin' there right now."

"Then I'll get in," said Stewart cheerfully.

As the Captain made no move to indicate any intention to help with the trunk, by a determined and energetic effort Stewart succeeded in getting it strapped to the rack on the rear of the barge.

"Some strong," remarked Cap'n Haskins admiringly.

They had gone some distance before the Captain spoke again. Then he said: "Where d'ye hail from?"

"New York," said Stewart.

"Out long?"

"Left New York Tuesday."

"Weather good?"

"Most of the voyage."

"Come to Portland by bo-at?"

"No; by train."

"Huh! Thought you sailed up! See them hosses?"

"Yes," said Stewart.

"Well, I call one of 'em Belle Hamlin an' the other one Nancy Hanks. Them's the two fastest hosses on any stage line in all Maine. They can get down to th' deepo an' back quicker than any two hosses in Rumford. They're racers, they are."

Stewart said nothing.

"I said," continued Cap'n Haskins—"I said they're racers."

Stewart looked at the horses, but still was silent.

Cap'n Haskins looked at him contemptuously. He took the whip from the socket and lashed the port horse. "Get up, ye ding-busted old snails!" he shouted.

On arriving at the hotel, Havens went into the office. His terrier, Bruce, had

a short and decisive interview with Joseph Rodman.

Joseph explained briefly to Aunt Zip. She was sewing in the shade of the back veranda when he came out, walking in a very dignified manner, but with a distinct limp. He lay down at her feet and began to lick his right paw.

"I hope, Joseph," said Aunt Zip, "that you made that new dog understand that you're the boss of this place."

Joseph wagged his crooked tail and looked at his friend as who should say: "England expects every man to do his duty."

"That's right, Joseph. They ain't anythin' that wins but winnin'. Ever stop to think about Alexander, and Peter the Great, and Napoleon, and George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson, and William Henry Harrison, and James G.

Blaine—but Blaine didn't win; but as I was sayin' to you, Joseph, the only folks that wins is those that wins. They ain't no half-way business about it. You got to make that new dog understand that you're boss, and when he comes to know that, then his education is more'n half completed. Did you make him understand, Joseph?"

Joseph rose and walked to the end of the veranda. He gave one short, sharp bark. Bruce, the bull-terrier, who had ventured out of the front door, scurried into the office again.

Joseph walked calmly back and sat down by his mistress's feet.

"That's right, Joseph," she said; "when folks don't quite understand that they're licked, it's just as well to remind 'em of it sometimes."

Meanwhile, Havens stood at the desk.

A boy had taken his bag and had given him a check for his coat and umbrella. There seemed to be nobody in the office to assign him a room. Presently the door at the back opened and Cap'n Haskins appeared at the desk.

"My friend, Mr. James Goodrich Whiting," began Havens, "the president of the Foxboro, Umbagog and Pacific Railroad, you know, told me that if I stopped at this hotel I'd get every attention."

Cap'n Haskins dipped the pen in the ink, turned the register toward Havens, and said nothing.

"I was saying," said Havens again, "that Mr. James Goodrich Whiting, the president of the Foxboro, Umbagog and Pacific Railroad, told me that if I came to this hotel I'd be treated in the best possible manner, and that I would get the best attention."

Cap'n Haskins pushed the register a little nearer, held out the pen more forcefully, and looked squarely in Havens's eye.

"I say," repeated Havens, "that Mr. Whiting said I would get the best attention."

"What d'ye want me to do? Kiss ye?" inquired Cap'n Haskins.

As Havens turned from the register two ladies crossed the hall.

"If they're all like that," he thought, "it won't be so dull up here, after all."

Havens stood watching the two ladies as they walked toward the lake. From the stable came Gordon dressed in riding costume. As he came up the steps he caught Havens's eye.

"Good afternoon," he said; "just get in?"

"Yes," said Havens, "and from all appearances, until I saw those two ladies

just now, I thought I was the only one that was in."

"Well, you are mighty near it, for, so far as I can discover, my wife, Miss Martin, and myself are the only guests at this hotel. But perhaps you know more about this mystery than I do. Have you ever been here before?"

"Mystery! What do you mean?"

"Well, perhaps not a mystery; but anyway, it seems rather queer that an establishment of this sort should be run as this is run, for three guests. As I said, there are only Mrs. Gordon, Miss Martin, and myself here, so far as I know."

"Gordon!" exclaimed Havens. "I am looking for a man named Gordon. I went over to Jersey to see him the other day, but the people at his house said he was away from home. His name is Robert

Gordon, and he is attorney in a case that I am interested in."

"My name is Robert Gordon, and I live in Jersey."

"Then you must be the man I'm looking for. I am Stewart Havens, of Belknap, Harrington & Havens, Pine Street. You may know the firm."

"Yes, I know the firm," said Robert.

"You are looking for me? What can I do for you?"

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"Gordon!" exclaimed Havens. "I am looking for a man named Gordon. I went over to Jersey to see him the other day, but the people at his house said he was away from home. His name is Robert

He may tell us something about the hotel."

"I wish he *would* come over," said Ethel; "it's all very well for you, Grace, because Mr. Gordon is here, but I'd like to have somebody to play with, and he's a nice little man, I'm sure."

The nice little man rowed toward them. As his boat grazed the landing he rose from the thwart.

"Nice *little* man," said Grace; 'he's eight feet, if he's an inch."

"So he is," said Ethel with satisfaction. "I love big men."

The big man drew the painter from the bow of his boat. He made all taut, stowed the oars under the lee of the stairway, and came up toward the pavilion.

As he passed the two ladies he lifted his cap and said: "Good afternoon." He did not look toward them.

just now, I thought I was the only one that was in."

"Well, you are mighty near it, for, so far as I can discover, my wife, Miss Martin, and myself are the only guests at this hotel. But perhaps you know more about this mystery than I do. Have you ever been here before?"

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"Gordon!" exclaimed Havens. "I am looking for a man named Gordon. I went over to Jersey to see him the other day, but the people at his house said he was away from home. His name is Robert



Haskins told me there'd be room for me in the hotel."

"Room!" exclaimed Grace. "I should think there was."

"Yes, this hotel is like all other summer hotels," said Ethel. "I haven't seen a young man around since I've been here."

"What do you call those?" said the visitor, pointing down the path.

"Oh, that's my husband," said Grace. "But who can the other man be?"

"Why, that must be Mr. Havens," cried Ethel.

"What are you talking about?" said Grace, with a look of amazement. "How do *you* know?"

"I saw his name on the register this morning; and he's from New York," said Ethel calmly.

Robert and Stewart Havens came up

the walk. "Who's your big friend?" asked Stewart.

"I don't know him," said Gordon. "But the young women seem to have struck up an intimate acquaintance."

The two men approached. "Mrs. Gordon," said Robert, "may I present Mr. Havens?"

Grace bowed and held out her hand. She turned toward Ethel. "Miss Martin," she said, "this is Mr. Havens, of New York."

There was a pause.

The stranger stepped forward.

"Mrs. Gordon," he said, "I am James Montgomery Black, of New York, son of James Montgomery Black, of Madison Avenue and Pine Street. Miss Martin, I am Jimmy Black, and if you will ask your brother about me I think he may remember who I am. We rowed in the

same crew at Harvard, and I have your picture at this moment in my room at home. Your brother gave it to me when you sent the two to him last year when he won the shot-putting contest. Maybe," and the young man hesitated—"maybe he didn't just exactly give it to me, but I have it just the same, and I should like ever so much to keep it. May I?"

"You may if it's the one with the hat on. The other was a fright. I've some new ones now that are ever so much prettier."

"I am very glad you came," said Grace, turning to Stewart Havens. "Until Miss Martin came, Mr. Gordon and I were the only guests at the house."

"It will be your great good fortune to have another distinguished arrival at your hotel if I can fix it up with Captain Haskins," said Mr. James Montgomery

Black. "Do you know where I can find that sage and sphinx-like individual?"

"I do, indeed," said Robert.

"I think he wants to see me," said Jimmy Black.

"All right," said Robert. "Let's go and find him."

The two men started for the hotel in search of Captain Haskins.

"Is it possible," said Stewart Havens, glancing at the pretentious building, "that there are only three guests in this great hotel?"

"There were only three yesterday," said Grace, "but since you've come we are four."

"And now that Jimmy Black's here we are five," said Ethel gleefully.

Stewart looked at Ethel quickly and then turned to Grace. His logical mind was working, and he wondered if there

were any real reason why there should be a fifth.

"It seems to me," he said to Grace, "that it doesn't make any difference how few the guests are, if they're the right kind."

Ethel looked at Grace with what might have been called a meaning glance in New England, but which in Columbus, Ohio, was nothing short of a wink.

This outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual elation was characteristic of Miss Martin, although on more than one occasion it had been misapprehended by a casual observer, thereby causing that volatile young woman much grief and pain.

"I think," she said, "that I agree with Mr. Havens. And I think, too, that that Black man is just the right sort for a good old summer time."

"You talk as though he were an Ethiopian," said Grace.

"Well," said Ethel, "he's a pretty good imitation of one. Did you ever see such a lovely tan?"

"Black and tan," said Havens. "By the way, Mrs. Gordon, did you know that I called at your house Monday night?"

"At my house? Was any one at home?"

"Oh, yes; a very charming young woman, who seemed to be having a beautiful time."

"What was she doing?" asked Grace eagerly.

"When I went into the library she was filling the alcohol lamp."

"To *my* chafing-dish?"

"I don't know; but she had some ripping old cups on the table that were the greatest I ever saw."

"Grandmother's cups!" exclaimed

Grace, clasping her hands with a tragic gesture. "Why, we never use those! They're Spode!"

"Of course they are, and beautiful specimens; and the young woman herself was also most attractive."

"Oh, is she?" said Grace. "What is she like?"

"Tall and blonde, with stunning violet eyes," replied Stewart.

Just then Gordon and young Black appeared.

"See the crowd coming!" cried Ethel. "Now the whole population of Umbagog House is assembled, and I move we hold a convention and find out the secret of this place and why there aren't more boarders."

"I wish we might," said Stewart; "in fact, that's just what I came up here to do."

CHAPTER IX

"MISS MARTIN," said Stewart, "I understand that there's an old lady and a dog out in the garden that are worth visiting. Shall we walk around that way?"

"But we are going rowing," said Ethel, looking a little disappointed.

"And we can go rowing afterward; but come around here first."

"Come on," said Jimmy cheerfully; "let's go. I haven't a thing to do this morning."

"Oh, she won't talk if the audience is too large," said Stewart.

"Yes, she will," said Ethel. "Come on, both of you."

"Well, go on, you two, and I'll join

you later," said Jimmy. "I'd rather talk with Mrs. Gordon than go with you, anyhow."

"Thank you," said Ethel; "we'd rather you would."

Stewart looked at her gratefully, and the two started toward the hedge which divided the kitchen garden from the lawns which fronted the hotel.

"We'll have to walk quietly," said Stewart. "I believe the lady doesn't particularly like audiences."

Aunt Zip and Joseph were in the garden, Aunt Zip on her knees patiently transplanting the small tomato-vines, and Joseph calmly watching with the air of a justice of the supreme court. His usual smile was missing. The attitude which he assumed was one which betokened a tremendous seriousness, and he regarded Aunt Zip with no enthusiasm, but with

a vast attention to detail. Apparently, he intended to render a decision in accordance with the evidence as it should be brought forward.

Aunt Zip carefully extracted a plant from the basket beside her, bored a hole with the end of the broomstick in the soil, poured in a little water, and set the roots in it, piling the dirt up around the stalk and patting it lovingly.

“The trouble with you, Joseph—I say the trouble with you is that you refuse to understand that you, as a great big dog, have responsibilities. What you ought to be is one of them big dogs I read about in the books—them dogs that go out in the mountains where they ain’t a single blessed thing, Joseph, not a single blessed thing but snow, and drifts, and blizzards—continual. Why, them dogs, Joseph—I say them dogs has little

kegs of liquor tied around their necks, and they just hunt around in them storms till they find a poor lost traveller who's fell over a cliff or somethin', and then they give him some liquor out of the kegs and drag him to the place they live, and save his life. Them dogs, Joseph—I say them dogs is real heroes, and that's what you were cut out for, only somehow your heroism don't seem to come to the surface.

“I used to know a dog once, Joseph—I used to know a dog who was a little bit of a tyke, no bigger'n one of them chickens. He had hair that was more like wool than what you might call dog hair, and it stuck out all over, just like a scrubbin'-brush—all around his eyes and everywhere. He looked like a mop, Josiah Quincy used to say, and once, Joseph—once Josiah Quincy said he was goin' to tie that dog to the end of a stick

and wash windows with him; said he'd make a good window cleaner—regular, like the ones you buy. But I want you to understand, Joseph—I want you to understand that while some folks might think all that tyke was good for was a mop, down deep in his heart he was one of the biggest heroes you ever saw, and he was just achin' all the time to show it. He was always laughin', Joseph—I say he was always laughin'."

Aunt Zip straightened up, selected another plant, and looked at Joseph.

Joseph opened his mouth widely, let his tongue drop casually out one side, panted thunderously, yawned, and lay down.

"I was sayin', Joseph," said Aunt Zip, who observed that her listener was not asleep, but was regarding her with wide-open eyes—"I was sayin', Joseph, that

that dog kept on laughin' all the time. They couldn't nobody see him without bein' his friend, and he just seemed to take them into his confidence and explain that he looked so sort of curious, considerin' his hair and all, just because he thought it was amusin', but that really he was a great big dog who was goin' to save lives and drownin' children, and all that sort of thing. He did, too, Joseph; he saved a whole family over to Foxboro once, because in the middle of the night, when the house caught fire, he barked awful loud and waked up all the people.

"Now, there, Joseph—there, I say, was a dog who felt his responsibilities. He wan't no more'n a sixteenth as big as you, yet you ain't never done anythin' heroic, and I don't believe you ever will. You're just like some folks I know. They're big enough and strong enough, and they ought

to know enough, to do the things they're told to do without everlastin'ly bein' sicked onto things—but they ain't heroes, Joseph; they ain't even as good as that Skye terrier I was tellin' you about. He certainly had some gumption, and you, Joseph—I say you and some folks I know——”

But Joseph was asleep, dreaming, perhaps, of heroic deeds.

Aunt Zip went on setting out her tomato-plants. “Some folks that don't seem big enough to be heroes seems to me are pretty big ones after all. Dogs and folks is mostly alike. Don't make so much difference whether they're big and handsome, or little and homely like Skye terriers. If they've got heroism in 'em it's bound to come out some day—handsome or homely.”

Stewart and Ethel had listened to

Aunt Zip's sermon from behind the hedge.

"What a dear old thing," whispered Ethel. "I'm going in to talk to her."

"No; don't," said Stewart. "Stay out here and talk to me."

"You're not a dear old thing."

"No, but I'm getting older every day. But you said you'd go rowing with me. Let's go and ask Captain Haskins for a boat."

Just then the Captain appeared, leading one of his team of racers.

"Good morning, Cap'n Haskins," said Stewart; "can we have a boat for an hour or two?"

"Well, 'tain't engaged yet."

"Then we can have it, I suppose?"

"Got to take Nancy Hanks to th' blacksmith's."

"Well, that hasn't anything to do with

our getting the boat, has it?" asked Stewart.

"Sh'd say it had."

"Why?" asked Ethel.

"Can't shoe a hoss an' calk a bo-at—not at th' same time."

"What's the matter with the boat?" asked Stewart.

"Leaks."

"But I thought," said Ethel, "that you told me yesterday that yours was the finest boat in all Maine."

"Well, s'posin' your grandfather'd had wheels. He'd been a omnibus." With which evasive reply the Captain led Nancy Hanks away in the direction of the blacksmith's shop.

"I guess," said Ethel, "that we don't go rowing."

"I guess we do," said Stewart; "there's more than one boat."

"Oh! let's not go rowing," said Ethel; "let's go back and sit on the veranda with the others."

"The others being Mr. Black, I suppose."

"He can't be others—he isn't twins," said Ethel flippantly.

"It's a good thing for me that he isn't. It's all I can do to steer clear of him. He's always under foot. Please go rowing with me. You said you would."

"Well, when you know me better you'll know that I never do what I think first I'm going to do."

"Thank you for the invitation."

"Invitation to what?"

"To know you better."

"Did you really need an invitation?"

"At any rate, I have it now, and I don't intend to refuse. Some people don't even wait for an invitation, I see."

"Isn't there a proverb or something about 'faint heart'?"

"Well, there isn't any doubt about the 'fair lady.'"

"That was pretty of you," said Ethel, "and I'll go rowing with you the very next time you ask me."

They approached the veranda. "Oh, there you are, Miss Martin," said Jimmy. "Are you ready?"

"Yes. Wait till I get a parasol."

Stewart watched her in amazement. She disappeared down the long hall, and soon returned with a fluffy chiffon affair which she handed to Stewart, saying: "Please put it up for me; it catches so."

Stewart fumbled with it.

"That's not the way," said Jimmy; "you're tearing it all to pieces." And taking it from Stewart's hand, he raised

the parasol and offered it gallantly to Miss Martin.

"Thank you, Mr. Black," said Ethel.
"Good morning, Mr. Havens; remember what I promised you—I'll go rowing with you the very next time you ask me."

Smiling back at Stewart from beneath the white chiffon halo, Ethel walked away with Jimmy Black.

"She'll wait one while!" grumbled Stewart to himself. But he asked her that afternoon, and she went with him.

CHAPTER X

"I'LL tell you what let's do," said Ethel, as they came out from breakfast. "Let's go on a picnic. We've been here ages and ages and we haven't been on a picnic yet."

"I hate picnics," said Jimmy, calmly settling himself in the hammock. "Picnics never are any fun. We haven't enough people, and we haven't any hampers, and there are too many woods, and we'd probably get lost; and it's going to rain, anyway."

"What a dear you are," said Ethel, "to fall right in with my plans so kindly. Let's get the things together and start right off. Where's Grace?"

Jimmy didn't move. "Mrs. Gordon," he said, "told me that nothing in the world would induce her to do anything to-day—specially picnics. She's going to stay in the house all day and read 'St. Elmo.'"

Grace came down the hall, singing. "What do you people say to a picnic?" she said. "It's a perfect day, and we haven't had a picnic since we've been here."

"Just the thing, Mrs. Gordon!" cried Jimmy, springing up. "I've just been suggesting to Miss Martin that we have a picnic, but she says they're stupid things."

"Oh, nonsense, Ethel," said Grace; "it would be lovely. Come on."

"Will Mr. Havens go?" asked Ethel tentatively.

"Must you always have Stewart

Havens?" sang Jimmy. "Can't you go without him once?"

Just then Robert and Stewart appeared. "We're going on a picnic," said Ethel.

"Beautiful plan," said Stewart. "May I row you over to the picnic grounds, Miss Ethel?"

"Yes, indeed," said Ethel, with enthusiasm.

"Oh," growled Jimmy, "we're not going in boats."

"Oh, aren't we?" asked Ethel. "Then will you drive me over, Mr. Havens?"

"I think," said Robert, "the only way to go on a picnic is to get a big wagon and all go together. Suppose we go find Cap'n Haskins and ask him to bring forth his team of racers."

"All right," said Ethel; "I'll appoint committees. Mr. Havens and I will persuade Cap'n Haskins; Grace, you coax

Aunt Zip to fix us up a gorgeous lunch; Mr. Gordon, get a map and find the nicest road through the woods; and Mr. Black, you can be a committee on hammocks and tents; and take a set of tennis, please, 'cause I may want to play a game."

"Oh, you'll play a game fast enough, young woman!" said Robert.

"Of course I shall, if I can find any one to play with," Ethel flung back over her shoulder, as she walked away with Stewart.

Cap'n Haskins was persuaded after much argument, and finally appeared with Belle Hamlin and Nancy Hanks hitched to the barge. In honour of the occasion he had taken off his weather-beaten sou'-wester and wore a captain's blue cap—the same he had worn in the days when the schooner *Sally* sailed out of Nantucket to the fields where Moby Dick lived, and

where Cap'n Ahab and his mates searched for the white whale, which finally met them tragically.

"See that port hoss?" he said, addressing Robert, with whom he had struck up a great friendship.

Robert admitted that he did. "What's the matter with Nancy?" he asked, looking at her critically.

"Wouldn't of believed she had a record, would you?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Robert guardedly; "you can never tell much by the looks of a horse what her record may be."

"Well, Nancy Hanks there's got a record from Fones's blacksmith shop to the barn back there that is pretty swift, I want to tell you."

"Why don't you?" chirped Ethel.

Cap'n Haskins glared at her. "Trim

little craft," he said, "but some skittish in runnin' t' wind'rd."

"Tell us about Nancy's record," said Robert, as the party drove away from the hotel.

Robert was sitting with the driver. Cap'n Haskins glanced back at Ethel, and seeing that she was deep in conversation with Jimmy, went on: "Well, 'twas this way. Take 'em by an' large, they probably ain't two finer hosses in th' State o' Maine, all th' way from Saco to Grand Manan, than them two hosses which I'm sailin' right here. But hosses is some like bo-ats. Ye gotto get acquainted with 'em. Ye gotto get the run o' their gear, sort of. I bought that port hoss from a fellow over to th' Aroostook County Fair one day an' he warranted her sound an' kind an' gentle as a kitten—but I guess he must 'a' meant one o'

them wildcat kittens," went on the Captain reminiscently, as he pulled on the reins.

"Well, what happened then?" asked Robert.

"Well, 'twas this way. She hadn't been shod lately, so I took her over to Fones's shop th' next day, an' he put all new shoes on 'er, fore 'n aft, an' charged me two shillings apiece. Well, I started to take that hoss home, an' she hadn't gone more'n a cable length from the shop 'fore she balked. Yessir, that hoss just clean balked. I argued with 'er some, an' Fones's man he pulled, an' I hauled on th' main sheet, an' Fones he got a rail an' got a purchase on top of a barrel he brought alongside an' he pried hard. I never see a man pry harder'n Fones did on that hoss. But budge 'er! No, siree! That hoss was plumb anchored, like's

though she'd run afoul 'f a rock down Minot's Ledge way."

"How did you finally get her off the rocks?" asked Robert.

"That's just what I'm a-tellin' ye of. We fust went into Fones's cabin an' talked 'er over. Fones's man he was for buildin' a fire under 'er, an' Fones he was for sendin' over to Thompson's for him to come over with his house-movin' machine, but I said, 'No, sir.' I jest set there an' prayed for a good sou'easter to spring up. I know 'f I could get a good, stiff breeze blowin' over that old mare's sta'bode quarter I'd fetch her off some sudden. Well, sir, I went back to th' barn an' I fetched out th' number two jib my schooner *Sally* used to carry in fresh winds off'n the Banks. I had an old spar that was gaff on th' *Sally* in them days when she was th' swiftest sailer out

o' Nantucket. Well, sir, I rigged up that gaff an' that number two jib, an' Fones's man helped me to rig 'em on th' upper deck of that hoss. Then she began to blow. Fishhooks! how she did blow, square out o' th' southeast."

"Then, did you finally get Nancy home?" asked Robert, as Cap'n Haskins stopped and gazed off the hills.

"Didn't I tell ye that hoss had a record?" said the Captain. "Well, sir, I sailed that hoss straight on th' compass course clean from Fones's blacksmith shop to th' barn. It was about two knots an' a quarter, an' I was some winded handlin' the sheet. But I sailed 'er home in less'n twenty minutes—'bout a six-knot clip."

"Has she ever balked since?" asked Robert.

"Well, not so's anybody'd notice it," said the Captain.

"This is a nice, cozy-looking wood," said Ethel; "let's get out and have our picnic here."

"Oh, this is no sort of a place," objected Jimmy. "Let's go on farther."

Nancy Hanks suddenly stopped, looked calmly round at her driver, and settled back in the traces.

"I swan t' goodness!" exclaimed Cap'n Haskins, "that ding-busted old mare's balked again."

It being necessary to get out of the barge so that Cap'n Haskins could argue with Nancy Hanks, the party decided that it was just as good a place as any for the picnic.

"I told you so," said Ethel; "it's just the loveliest place. Now I want a swing put up, and, Grace, let's set the table right away."

Before the table was set a black cloud

which had been threatening for an hour or more seemingly burst. When it rains in the Maine woods it rains hard, and on this particular day it just deluged the place. What shelter was afforded by the trees was little. They were soon wet through, and there was little protection afforded by the barge itself, for it was an open affair, and there was nothing to keep the torrents from beating in the sides. There was but one thing to do—take the wetting as philosophically as might be, and the party from Umbagog House did the best they could.

“If that horse hadn’t balked,” said Stewart, “we might at least be driving toward a hotel.”

“You certainly have the mind of a deep thinker, Havens,” said Jimmy. “So we might.”

“I wish,” said Grace, “that we’d stayed

under that other tree over there; it doesn't look quite so damp as this one."

"Looks, Grace," said Robert, "like Cap'n Haskins's racers, are deceiving."

"But the question is," said Ethel, "how are we to get home?"

Cap'n Haskins critically regarded his port horse. "'F I had a good number two jib here, an' a small spar, like a good-sized catboat boom, I'd be willin' to bet we'd make port in about half an hour, 'f this wind 'd hold."

CHAPTER XI

CAP'N HASKINS looked casually again toward the port horse. "'F I had 'a' bin to Point Judith, er 'long 'bout Jupiter Inlet, er even 'bout Port o' Pim, 'long Horta way, then this would 'a' bin jest th' place fer a clambake."

The horses didn't move, and had the appearance of immobility. The sun came out and shone over the lake, making the little inlet and its inviting shore seem the very place for the sort of a picnic which in the northeastern shore of the American continent is dedicated, in the season, to the clambake.

"Are there any clams here?" asked Grace.

"Well, I ain't seen any very lately," replied the Captain.

"That doesn't matter," said Ethel impatiently. "Let's have a clambake, and let's have it quick."

"All right," said Grace, "let's do it. But how do we get to the place?"

"Dead easy to get over there," said Jimmy. "We'll just get out and walk."

"Walk all that distance!" exclaimed Robert; but Ethel was already out of the barge, and there was nothing for the others to do but follow.

With a resigned air Jimmy sadly began to gather up the hampers.

"Oh, we don't want those things!" said Robert. "We want clams, and tarpaulins, and watermelons, and green corn. I've built clambakes before."

"Yes, of course," said Havens genially.

"Bring the sea-food, Jimmy. We can't make a clambake out of sandwiches and sponge cakes. I'll go ahead and rake up some driftwood."

Ethel was already walking toward the little bay which cut in from the lake. Havens strode rapidly after her. Jimmy watched them. He dropped the baskets hastily. "Look after the sponge cake, Gordon," he said; "I'm going to hunt some sea-food."

Cap'n Haskins gazed stolidly at his racers. Nancy Hanks gloomed and appeared to be interested in the grade of the road ahead of her, but made no move. The Captain became impatient.

He flicked his whip and looked furtively back toward Robert, who was taking the hampers out of the barge.

"Be ye goin' t' take them all?" he asked.

Grace laughed.

"Cap'n Haskins," she said, "you are the only sensible one in this crowd. Let's you and Mr. Gordon and me sit down here and have luncheon."

Cap'n Haskins looked again at Nancy Hanks. "Ye ding-busted old bo-at," he exclaimed, "ye can stay there till yer anchor chains bust!" He struck the stubborn Nancy with his whip. "Hope yer rudder's carried away!" he said, as he got out. Then he took a good old-fashioned painter from under the seat and tied it around Nancy's neck. The other end he tied to a tree. "Now will ye stand still?" he said.

Nancy did not deign to look at him, but Belle Hamlin turned her head and gazed pathetically at her master. He was about to help himself to a sandwich which Grace had placed with the rest of

the luncheon on the cloth. The Captain saw the move of his horse. He walked toward her and took a bite from the sandwich. The rest of it he fed to Belle. "Ain't ye glad ye're a good hoss?" he said.

Nancy never moved an eyelash.

The Captain stared at her contemptuously. As he passed her he gave her a dig in the ribs with his elbow. He might as well have struck the rock of Teneriffe for all the impression it made on Nancy. He went back and sat down on the ground beside Robert and Grace. "She ain't such a Lucy Foster, after all," he said.

"To an unprejudiced observer," remarked Grace, "it seems funny that Ethel should prefer imaginary clams to real chickens."

"How does one catch imaginary clams?"

said Robert thoughtfully. "Do you suppose they dig them, or tread them out?"

"I thought they caught them with a hook and line," said Grace.

"So they do," said Cap'n Haskins pleasantly; "and I remember Cap'n Bartlett, schooner *Grace Hawkins*, out o' Glo'ster—he thought he could ketch a wife with a kedge anchor. Well, he went over Rocky Neck way one night, carryin' 'bout a half-load and a kedge what he had had fixed over to th' blacksmith's. Well, he sighted a likely lookin' craft up th' ro-ad a piece an' he set his tops'ls. 'Wher' ye bound?' he said, when he run 'longside. Not receivin' no answer, he jest sort o' threw out th' kedge. Well, th' kedge fell down right in front o' this 'ere craft that was a-runnin' t' wind'rd an' she jest kind o' stranded on it like. Cap'n Bartlett hauled up sort o' in th' wind an'

hailed again. 'Where ye bound?' he hailed, sort o' loud like, for he was gettin' pretty mad."

The Captain stopped talking and reached for another sandwich.

"What happened then?" asked Grace.

"Well, I dunno," replied the Captain, "but I seen Mrs. Bartlett once when we run into Glo'ster, an' she said the Cap'n ketched her with a anchor."

By the time the Captain had finished his story, Grace and Robert had packed the hamper, and the three went in search of the clam-diggers.

They found them comfortably seated on the trunk of a fallen tree.

"What are you doing?" asked Grace as she approached.

"We're playing castaways on a desert island," said Ethel, "and I'm Robinson Crusoe."

"And I'm her man Friday," said Jimmy promptly.

"And I'm her man the rest of the week," said Stewart.

"And to-day is Saturday," said Ethel, sighing.

"Is that very elocutionary sigh indicative of joy or despair?" asked Stewart.

"It was meant to express excessive joy," replied Ethel.

"Because Friday doesn't come for a week yet?" asked Stewart.

Jimmy glared at him. "I guess——" he began.

"Is Nancy Hanks still balking?" interrupted Ethel, smiling sweetly at Cap'n Haskins.

The Captain glanced back toward the place where the horses were tied. "'Pears to be," he said.

"That means," said Robert placidly,

"that we've got to stay here all the rest of our lives."

"How nice," said Grace. "Shall we live in trees, like the Swiss Family Robinson?"

"I choose that tall pine over there," said Ethel gleefully, "and I shall have that lovely cradley-looking place at the top for my drawing-room."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Jimmy; "how shall I get up there to call on you on my Fridays?"

"How are you going to get up there yourself?" asked Stewart.

"I shall have a rope ladder," answered Ethel.

"But," persisted Stewart, "how will you get your rope ladder up there?"

"I shall carry it up with me when I go," answered Ethel with dignity.

"Well," said Jimmy, "I choose that

grove of evergreens, and then when the icy blasts come on I can draw my firs closely round me and lie down to pleasant dreams."

"Sounds like a bear hibernating," said Ethel. "Shall you come out in the spring?"

"Yes," said Jimmy affably; "on May-day, I think. If you're waking, call me early."

"I shall choose an apple-tree," said Robert, with great deliberation. "In the fall I can eat the apples, and in the spring I think I'll look so lovely when the blossoms come out all round me."

"You will," said Ethel; "you'll look like a bride."

"Why don't *you* choose an apple-tree?" said Jimmy, a little pointedly.

"Don't bother me with questions. I'm busy now choosing a tree for Captain

Haskins. What do you think of a horse-chestnut?"

The Captain had wandered away from the party in the direction of his exasperating steeds. As he passed Nancy he stepped behind the tree where she was tied and casually seemed to tie the rope a little tighter. Really, he cut it almost in two. It held by the smallest fiber, so that the slightest pull on the part of the horse would break the halter. Nancy never moved.

The Captain walked on after Grace and Robert. He had not gone ten rods when Nancy's ears removed themselves from their couchant position and assumed an attitude of distinct interest. The Captain walked on. Nancy gave a vicious jerk at the halter. The rope broke, and, balky no longer, she and her well-behaved mate—the famous Belle

Hamlin—walked on after the Captain as though nothing had happened.

The Captain stopped and waited for them to come up. As they approached, he took a sandwich from his pocket and held it out toward Nancy. She ate it greedily. "Ye're a dad blamed old derilic'," remarked Cap'n Haskins, "but ye an' Belle are a pretty good team o' racers. Get ap, dern yer old hides!" He climbed into the barge, gave the horses a vigorous cut with the whip, and drove back to the place where the party waited on the bank of the lake.

"I told ye them's racers," he remarked as he drew up.

CHAPTER XII

"WHAT do you suppose Cap'n Haskins is going to do with those horses now?"

"I don't know, Miss Martin," replied Jimmy, "but since he is headed in the direction of the blacksmith shop, and the horses seem to be in a sort of negligée, I deduce new shoes all round."

"I've never seen a horse shod," said Grace. "How do they do it?"

"Well," said Robert, "first they seat the horse in a chair, and then the blacksmith, taking a shoe-horn from his pocket, inquires if his customer prefers patent leather or suede."

"Indeed," said Grace, much interested; "and then what does the horse say?"

"The horse laughs," said Stewart, without looking up from his paper.

"Let's go over and see 'em laugh," exclaimed Ethel, tumbling out of the hammock and gathering up her combs.

"Here's another one," said Jimmy, diving under the hammock.

"There should be two more. Oh, thank you. Come on, Grace; let's go."

"We'll all go," said Stewart, and together the party started, followed at a respectful distance by Joseph Rodman Payne. Surreptitiously obtaining his freedom had given him an air of elation, which was, however, tempered by the apprehension of discovery.

"Joseph Rodman Payne," said Robert, turning to look at the dog, "how did you manage to escape from Aunt Zip?"

Joseph sat down square in the middle of the road. His lower jaw dropped, and

his tongue hung limply out at one side. His eyes became moist, and a very slight wag of his tail indicated a questioning attitude of mind, as one who had expected much and had received but scant consideration. His appearance was one of the utmost dejection, though he apparently tried to laugh it off.

"Oh, come on, Joe," cried Ethel enticingly; "Aunt Zip won't catch you."

Joseph came on. He did not run—he romped. With little leaps of joy he came to Ethel's side, letting off yelps of glee. Then he ran into the bushes at the roadside, worried a root from a fallen tree, and brought it to lay at the feet of the divinity who had accorded him at least one day of absolute freedom. Ethel stooped and picked up the stick. She threw it into the bushes again. Joseph went after it, and for the rest of

the day he clung close to Ethel, carrying the stick as a squire might carry the lance of his knight. "Good Joe!" said Ethel. Joseph smiled broadly. His life had been rounded out. He was supremely happy.

"Your deductions," said Stewart, "were quite correct. There's Cap'n Haskins and his horses just going into Fones's shop."

"Hurry up," said Grace, "or we'll be too late for the performance."

As Grace was the only one who was particularly interested in horseshoes, the others sat down outside, appropriating the long bench invariably found in front of a blacksmith's shop.

The blacksmith was hammering diligently. The rhythmic swinging of the hammer on the anvil sounded from within.

"I love to hear that," said Ethel. "It's so—so——"

"Poetical," suggested Jimmy.

"Yes," replied Ethel, "poetical. That's just what I mean. I believe I could write poetry if I could hear that thing long enough."

"Under the spreading chestnut tree——" began Stewart.

"Huh!" exclaimed Ethel; "if I couldn't write better poetry than that old thing in the school reader I'd give up."

"Go on and do it, then; Mr. Longfellow won't mind."

"Well, maybe you think I can't write verses. Why, I had some in the *Ohio State Journal* twice."

"You mean the *Rural New-Yorker*, don't you?"

"No, I don't; but do they take poetry? I'll send them some."

"Oh, do you really write poetry?" asked Grace. "I always wanted to. How do you do it?"

"Oh, it's just as e-easy," said Ethel. "You just make the end words rhyme, and then it's a poem."

"Dash off one in an idle moment for us, won't you?" said Jimmy.

"I would, but I haven't an idle moment."

"Do I occupy your time so awfully?"

"Yes, of course you do. Couldn't you give me a short vacation?"

"Just to show my innate nobility of character," returned Jimmy, "I will sacrifice myself for the good of humanity and allow you fifteen minutes in which to compose an elegy."

"Oh, that isn't my line at all! I only write verses about things in your heart, you know."

"Darts," suggested Robert.

"No," returned Ethel, "not valentines. I mean just little rhymes like—like——"

"Mr. Wegg," suggested Robert, anxious to be helpful.

"I've never read his books, but I mean pretty little love poems like Elizabeth Barrett Browning's."

"Oh, well," said Jimmy, "I needn't give you a vacation for that. I'll help you."

"A further instance of your innate nobility of character?" asked Stewart.

"Yes. I'm nothing if not helpful. Command me, Miss Martin, and see if my assistance is worth having?"

"Oh, you can't exactly help me. I don't think we could collaborate, but you write one and I'll write one and then we can compare notes."

"Let's have a symposium," exclaimed Grace, "like the old Greeks, or whatever

they were, and have prizes, and judges, and things."

"I'll be the judge," said Robert.

"And I'll be the prize," said Jimmy.

"Then I won't compete," said Ethel decidedly. "But I'll write my poem all the same. Somebody give me a pencil and some paper. I've got a positive inspiration."

"Oh," exclaimed Grace, "can you write with a lot of people around?"

"No, of course not. I want you people all to go away—down by the lake or somewhere."

"Not on your life!" said Jimmy. "We'll go as far as that tree, and no farther. You write as good a one as you can at a distance of thirty feet."

"All right," replied Ethel, who had already assumed the far-away look which always betokens poetic fire.

The others obediently walked toward the tree. "If Ethel can write poetry," said Grace, "I believe I can, too. Give me some paper, Robert."

"Of course you can, Mrs. Gordon," said Jimmy. "Why, I can do it myself. There's a peculiar birdlike quality about my song that is extremely fine. Would you like to hear some?"

"Better go up into the tree," suggested Stewart, "and carol down to us."

"I will," said Jimmy, swinging himself up by the lower branches, and perching on a bough.

"What kind of poems do you think I could write best, Robert?" asked Grace.

"Pastorals, I should think," said Robert, with an air of grave consideration.

"How do pastorals go?" asked Grace.

"They go this way," replied Robert:

“The milkmaid strolled across the lea,
Her brimming pail was full of milk;
The rustic swain, ah, where was he?
The huddled sheep—the huddled sheep——”

Well, anyhow, Grace, that's the way
a pastoral goes.”

“It's lovely,” said Grace, “but I don't
believe I can write one. I wish I had
chosen some other kind. What kind are
you going to write, Mr. Havens?”

“Nautical ballads, I think. There is
something that appeals to me very
strongly in lines like these:

“With cutlass for scepter the sea is our state
And death is our portion, come soon or come late;
So meet it half way, then, leave cowards to wait—
With cutlass for scepter the sea is our state.”

“I say, Havens, did you do that?”
called Jimmy from his tree.

“No, but I wish I had.”

“Can you do things like that?” asked
Grace.

“No; I wish I could.”

"My poem is ready," announced Jimmy cheerfully, "when anybody wants to hear it."

"Never mind now," said Robert, who was scribbling fast and furiously. "We'll let you know when we're ready."

"What are you writing, Robert?" asked Grace.

"Oh, I'm so imbued with the spirit of the place that I'm writing after Longfellow. Don't interrupt me, or Miss Martin will get ahead of me."

Ethel was dreaming. She sat with her chin in both hands, looking down at Joseph. The big dog, who, because she had asked him to escape from his thralldom, had made himself her devoted slave, sat gazing at her in grateful adoration.

"Your fifteen idle moments have expired, Miss Martin," called Jimmy; "is your love song ready?"

"I haven't written a line yet," replied Ethel, "but I've been thinking the most beautiful things. Wait just a minute and I'll bring them over."

"Mine is nearly done, too," said Grace, "and it's a really truly pastoral."

Robert kept on writing as though his life depended upon it. Jimmy sat astride a branch vigorously whistling and busily digging at the tree-trunk with his knife.

"You will note, ladies and gentlemen," he observed casually, "that we have here the illustrations for Miss Martin's love poem. On the right behold the wounded heart, pierced by Cupid's wicked dart. The dart you will observe above, and —too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ra-love."

"Nobody asked you to say your poem yet, Jimmy," said Grace, smiling up at him.

"That isn't my real poem, Mrs. Gordon.

Those are just the lines which tell what the illustrations are. They always have them, you know."

"But they don't fit my poem," said Ethel, who had joined the group under the tree.

"Oh, never mind. Illustrations never do fit—much," replied the artist in the boughs.

"There!" cried Grace enthusiastically; "mine's done. Now, if the rest of you are ready, let's read them."

"All right," said Robert; "mine isn't finished, but I can just as well stop it here as further along."

CHAPTER XIII

"LET me say mine first," said Jimmy, "or I shall forget it. It commemorates a historic event, and I believe that Mr. Thackeray once unsuccessfully tried to write an ode upon the same theme. It's in the nature of a glee—a merry little glee. This is it:

"The clanging, reverberant toll
For the passing of Wellington's soul,
The funeral knell
And the requiem bell
Kept time to the drum's muffled roll."

"That's good work, Jimmy," said Robert approvingly. "I can fairly see the funeral car, the waving black plumes, and the furled flags. It sounds uncommonly like a limerick, though."

"It is a limerick," replied Jimmy.

"Ah! And are they much used for dirge forms?"

"Well, I haven't written many yet," said Jimmy modestly, "but I think they will become popular."

"No reason why they shouldn't," said Stewart; "some limericks are sad enough for anything."

"Well, I think your dirge was very nice, Jimmy," said Grace.

"Thank you, Mrs. Gordon. May we have your verses now?"

"Certainly," replied Grace. "I will read you my pastoral, and a very nice pastoral it is. I am sure it conforms strictly to the rules laid down. This is it:

"'Across the lea the milkmaid strolled,
Filled full of milk her brimming pail;
The huddled sheep were in the fold,
The rustic swain sat on the rail.'

Now that, I flatter myself, is a pure and simple pastoral."

"It's pure enough," said Jimmy, "and simple enough, but it isn't finished. Now I should say that the next stanza should be something like this:

"'The lambkins ran across the lea;
The rustic swain, whose name was Dan,
Ran toward the strolling maid—ah me!
The little brooklet also ran.'"

"That's very nice and very pastoral," remarked Robert, "but you don't seem to get anywhere."

"Pastorals never get anywhere," said Jimmy. "They are simply descriptive."

"But you can get somewhere and be descriptive, too," continued Robert, "although in pastorals they never get anywhere but home—like this, you know:

"'Across the lea the lowing kine
Wound slowly on their homeward way.
The cattle plodded home in line,
The cows went home at close of day.'

"Now that, you see, is the real thing. It is distinctly Grayish."

"It is," said Grace; "but I'd like to know more about the milkmaid and Dan."

"Would you?" said Jimmy kindly; "then you shall. Thus speak they, sing they, tell they the tale:

"'The milkmaid's name was Mary Bines;
Her bodice was of blue galloon;
Her kirtle buttoned up the back;
She wore two patent leather shoon.'"

"Go on," said Grace excitedly.

"And tell about Dan," said Ethel.

"'Dan sat upon the rail one day;
The wind was sighing in the pines;
Then Dan got down and went away:
Alas! alas! for Mary Bines.'"

"Now, you see," continued Jimmy, "the pastoral is properly rounded to a close. Everybody is disposed of, and there's nothing left to the imagination. Whose turn next? Gordon, have you anything to offer?"

"I should say I had—several reams of first-class poetry of the New England school. It shows traces of the influence of the early Indian impressions, and even goes for some of its inspiration back to the time of the epics of Finland. Now, in the Kalevala, for instance——"

"Sounds like blank verse," suggested Ethel.

"Oh, I haven't begun yet," said Robert.

"This is the real beginning:

"Should you ask me whence these Havens,
Whence these many Blacks and Havens,
Why they came and why they tarry
At the house of the Umbagog,
I would answer, I would tell you
'Tis because of one fair maiden,
Loveliest of Ohio women,
Sweetest of Ohio women—
Ethel Martin, of Columbus.
Should you ask me where we found her,
Where we found this priceless treasure,
I would not refuse to tell you.
I would rise up where I'm standing,
And with voice reverberating,
Shouting to the winds of heaven,
I would tell you what you ask me.

I would tell and tell you truly
That we found her at the station;
At the Rumford railroad station,
Sitting on the station platform,
On a trunk upon the platform,
Weeping tears for her relations,
For her lost and fond relations
That she lost upon a railroad.
Careless girl, to go and lose them,
Lose her fond and dear relations
Who had brought her up so kindly
With such model early training.
So we gathered up Miss Martin,
Took her from the railroad station
To the house of the Umbagog.
To the house of the Umbagog
Came the many Blacks and Havens,
Found the lovely Ethel Martin,
Fairest of Ohio's daughters,
Fairest girl in all the landscape
Touchin' of an' appertainin'
To the city of Columbus
In the land of the Ohio.
Jimmy Black and Stewart Havens
Straightway fell in love with Ethel,
Fell in love with Ethel Martin,
Ethel Martin, of Columbus.
But alas for Black and Havens,
Though the girl is friendly to them,
Very, very friendly to them,
Yet they are but empty favours
She bestows upon these suitors.
For her heart is in the highlands,

Or at least out in Columbus,
Or perchance in Cincinnati—
Possibly it's out in Zanesville.
Or in Dayton or in Springfield.
Maybe it is lost in Cleveland
Or Toledo or Sandusky.
Or perhaps in Ashtabula,
Or in Painesville or in Piqua,
Lima, Youngstown or Coshocton;
Anyhow, she's gone and lost it
Down along the fierce Miami,
Somewhere far out in Ohio.
So these lovelorn eastern suitors
Are not in it with the other—
He who from the wild and woolly
West will come to joust and tourney
For the favour of the maiden,
And successfully will woo her;
Lochinvar, elate with triumph,
Will go homeward to Columbus,
Taking Ethel Martin with him."

"How did you know it?" cried Ethel, as Robert stopped reading. "Who told you about him? He's the one I wrote my verses to."

"You might read them now," said Stewart.

"Well, I will, but you read yours first."

"Mine aren't written," replied Stewart.
"You see, I have one line, but I can't write any others up to it."

"I should think," said Grace, "that if you could write one line you could write others."

"But I didn't write this line," said Stewart. "It's a line I found."

"Well," said Robert judicially, "you don't seem to have accomplished much."

"Tell us your line," said Jimmy, "and we'll help you write the others."

"It's just this," said Stewart:

"'He shot his arrow at the sun.'"

"I don't see anything very phenomenal about that line," commented Jimmy.

"Well, you see," said Stewart, "it was the only arrow he had."

"Why did he shoot it at the sun?" asked Ethel.

"Because he liked that mark," said

Stewart wistfully. Then, after a moment's silence: "We are waiting for your verses, Miss Martin."

"My arrow didn't hit the sun," she said; "I have torn up my verses." She scattered the scraps of paper on the ground.

"Oh, Ethel!" exclaimed Grace. "What a pity! Why didn't you save them for me? Can't you write them again?"

"No, I can't. I'm never going to write any more verses."

"Never mind," suggested Jimmy cheerfully. "I'll write Miss Martin's verses for her. What was the subject?"

"Oh, it was about a man and a girl."

"All right, said Jimmy, "that's easy. How would this do?

"'There was a man in our town—
There was a girl there, too:
Somehow the man he looked like me;
The girl she looked like you.'"

"That is beautiful," said Ethel; "do go on."

"Can't," replied Jimmy; "that's as far as the story has gone up to the present moment."

"Well," exclaimed Grace, "this present moment is time for us to start home. It's 'most dinner time."

Cap'n Haskins, leading his team, came from the shop. Joseph, who had been lying in adoration at Ethel's feet, rose, stretched himself, and led the way. Robert walked with the Captain. Stewart fell in with Mrs. Gordon, and Ethel and Jimmy came along behind.

"Is yours a continued story?" asked Ethel, not looking at her companion.

"I hope it will be," said Jimmy.

CHAPTER XIV

AFTER breakfast the next morning Jimmy Black went up to his room for his pipe. As he sauntered down the corridor he noticed a door opening out on a particularly attractive little balcony. Going out, he discovered that it overlooked the kitchen garden and the back porch which was the special domain of Aunt Zip and Joseph. This pleased the young man, as he thought it might assist him in his endeavours to solve the mystery of the hotel. For as he looked down he saw Josiah Quincy Hurd, Aunt Zip, and the attorney for the Foxboro, Umbagog and Pacific Railroad Company in deep conversation. Joseph Rodman Payne, wear-

ing a most judicial attitude of attention, sat near. Occasionally he wagged his tail, opened his mouth widely and yawned.

"You needn't begin to get tired, Joseph," said Aunt Zip. "We've got to stay here till September 16th, and it's perfectly ridiculous, too! They don't know it, but I do, and that contract is lost. I've always discovered, Joseph, in the course of a life that's been a good deal longer than yours, that if you've got to do a thing, you might just as well pretend you want to whether you do or not, and if you pretend hard enough you'll make yourself think you like it. It's a good plan, Joseph; just you get out there and try it on them chickens and see if it don't work. Make yourself think you want to chase chickens."

As usual, Joseph accepted Aunt Zip's theory as oracular. He started and

walked doggedly toward the garden. As he walked an uncertainty formed itself in his mind, and half-way down the path he hesitated, turned, and looked back at Aunt Zip. She was still gazing at him over her glasses.

Joseph went on.

At the words "lost contract" Jimmy Black's heart bounded. What more thrilling suggestion could loom up before the excited imagination of one whose detective instinct had been aroused and was already in good working order?

"Lost contract!" he exclaimed, "lost contract! Of course that's the explanation. I see it all now. That's why people are always looking for things around this hotel. I'll do a little looking myself, and I'll do it scientifically, too. Amateur sleuths always rummage in unheard-of places, but the real Sherlocks

find the missing will right in front of their eyes if they only have sense enough to look straight ahead. I will look straight ahead."

He sat down on the railing and looked straight ahead. This necessarily brought him facing the house, and, gazing at the overlapping shingles, he saw tucked under one of them a white envelope.

"I perceive a clue," said Jimmy Black, leaning comfortably against the post. He lighted his pipe calmly and settled down to enjoy a deduction.

"I am looking for a lost contract. I look straight ahead, and I see a long white envelope held beneath a shingle. I deduce its length from the fact that about eight inches are sticking out and yet it does not fall. I deduce, further, that it has not been there very long, because it is not weatherbeaten. I deduce

that it was put there by a woman, because no man would do such a fool thing as to conceal a contract beneath a shingle. The only woman interested in this contract is apparently the wide lady with the dog. Consequently, I deduce that this is the contract, and that she put it there. I shall sail for Scotland Yard to-morrow."

Only the day before, Ethel Martin had appropriated for her own exclusive use this very balcony on which James Montgomery Black was drawing his deductions. She had brought there her writing-tablet, her work-basket, and a few books, giving the place a cozy effect which, though it was right before his eyes, had utterly failed to impress itself upon Jimmy Black's superlatively deductive mind.

In the freshest of white shirt-waists and the stiffest of white piqué skirts, Ethel suddenly appeared on the veranda.

"Oh, I didn't know you were here," she said.

"Yes, I'm Sherlocking. Won't you come and help?"

"Of course I will. I love to Sherlock. What's it all about?"

"Can you? Do you know how to deduce?"

"No, not very well; but can't I be Doctor Watson? and you can try your conclusions on me."

"All right. Sit down here beside me and I'll tell you where I'm at."

Ethel, ready to listen, sat down on the rail beside the amateur sleuth.

"Do you see that envelope?" said Jimmy, pointing dramatically at the white paper beneath the shingle.

"Yes," said Ethel, not thinking it necessary to say that she had placed it there herself less than an hour before.

"That," said Jimmy, "is the lost contract!"

"Is it?" said Ethel.

"It was concealed there," went on Jimmy.

"If you call that concealing——"

"Well, anyway, it was put there, and the fact that it is there entails dark and dire consequences."

"How perfectly awful," said Ethel, properly thrilled.

"Yes," went on Jimmy, warming to his subject, "and the innocent-looking white envelope contains the solution of the mystery of the house of Umbagog, the explanation of the blank register, and the reason why we are going to stay till September 16th."

"Goodness gracious me!" said Ethel. "Does it, really? How did all *that* get in there?"

tablet, he thrust the point of it beneath the flap of the long envelope.

"I am surprised," said Ethel, "that you would think of opening a sealed envelope addressed to somebody else."

"But it isn't addressed to anybody."

"Lucky for me; but the principle is the same. You've no right to open it if it isn't addressed to you."

"In considering tremendous issues, such as the solving of the Umbagog mystery, one does not take into account the trifling conventionalities of the social system. How often have I told you, Watson, that the end justifies the means? If you want to be hanged for murder you must first shoot your man."

"As Mr. Dooley says, 'yer opinions is inthrestin' but not convincin'.' Your deductions are all right, and your theories are all right, too, but it happens that I

wrote that letter and put it up there myself."

"Another good deduction gone wrong," said Jimmy Black, regretfully handing the long envelope to Ethel. "Then I can only deduce that the mystery is as far from a solution as ever."

"Or farther," said Ethel.

CHAPTER XV

THE next day it rained.

All the guests of Umbagog House were gathered in the great parlour.

"Of course," Mrs. Gordon was saying, "in a perfectly hopeless storm like this, in a summer hotel, there is only one possible thing to do."

"What's that?" asked Ethel's voice from a curtained window-seat at the other end of the room.

"Go swimming?" asked Jimmy Black, who was there, too.

"No," said Mrs. Gordon, walking toward them; "a charity bazaar."

"Gorgeous!" cried Ethel; "and amateur theatricals!"

"And dancing," suggested Stewart.

"Oh, I hate crushes," said Robert.

"Well, you needn't come till time to take me home," said Grace.

"You needn't come at all," remarked Stewart. "I'll look after Mrs. Gordon."

"Oh, yes, you must come," said Ethel. "We want just loads of dancing men, and we must have a lot of people to buy the charity things."

"What's the charity? Who gets the benefit?" asked the practical Stewart.

"It ought to be for an orphans' home," said Robert. "They always are."

"Let's have it for that," said Ethel. "I just love orphans."

"Begin on me," said Jimmy; "I'm one."

"Are you?" said Ethel. "So am I."

"Then the benefit is for us, and we'll

have all the profits and half the gate money."

"I'm a half orphan," said Stewart hopefully.

"They don't count," said Jimmy airily. "Let's get ready right away. Gordon, you can put up the booths while Havens builds the stage."

"Stage! and booths! How perfectly grand!" exclaimed Ethel. "Come on, Grace; let's go and make pincushions, and crinkly paper lamp-shades, and shaving-balls, and slippers, and moss mats, for the fancy tables."

"Can't do it; I've got to get my costume ready for the theatricals."

"Oh, so have I. What's the play?"

"I don't know. Would you have 'Lady of Lyons' or 'Twelfth Night'?"

"Or 'Midsummer Night's Dream' out on the lawn," suggested Robert.

"In mackintoshes and goloshes," supplemented Stewart.

"I've written a play," suggested Jimmy modestly.

"Never mind if you have," said Ethel kindly. "You can be in ours just the same."

By impressing the corps of porters, bell-boys, waiters, and even members of the hotel orchestra and the haughty clerk himself into their service, the necessary preparations were made without undue exertions on the part of the guests of Umbagog House. A piano-box, brought from the cellar, made a very satisfactory stage. It was equipped with footlights, which to the uninitiated observer looked strangely like stable lanterns, but were picturesque for all that. It was easy enough to secure curtains, and the red plush parlour portieres swung with an

easy grace against the wide arch between the two parlours.

The booths were not built with that degree of skilled carpentry which characterises the general booth of a charity bazaar, but were frankly makeshifts. However, they answered the purpose, and were beautifully decorated by the smiling maids who came delightedly from the upper regions in response to Grace's request. From the various rooms there were collected enough pin-cushions and match-trays to make an impressive stock in trade.

"The play's the thing," said Grace, as she came back to the parlour after luncheon, "and as there seems to be some slight diversity of opinion, perhaps we'd better take a rising vote on it."

"You can vote and you can vote," said Ethel, "but I won't play anything but Ophelia."

"Hamlet's mine," said Stewart.

"That's all very well," said Grace, "but I have the loveliest Spanish dagger, and I want to be Lady Macbeth."

"So you shall," said Jimmy promptly. "It is an exploded theory that dramatic art should be confined to tradition. It is absurd to keep a good character always in one play. Why not Lady Macbeth in the play of 'Hamlet'? Why not, indeed? And I shall be the Wizard of Oz."

"Let me play the lion's part," said Robert. "I have a beautiful roar. Everybody will say, 'Let him roar again! Let him roar again!'"

"Well, then, *that's* all settled," exclaimed Ethel, "and I can wear my white mull, and I must have a wreath of flowers for my hair."

"I'll sell you one," said Jimmy promptly. "I'm going to be a little flower-girl."

"Then I guess I'll be Rebecca at the well," put in Robert.

"All right; do," said Ethel. "But, Mr. Black, it seems as if you might give me that wreath of flowers instead of making me buy it."

"Not at all," said Jimmy. "We want to raise a large sum for the orphans, and every little helps."

Being a gala night, the tables in the dining-room were specially decorated, the orchestra gave its most attractive programme, and Grace and Ethel wore their prettiest frocks.

The five guests of Umbagog House seated themselves at their own table and gazed at the other twenty-five tables, equally beflowered but unoccupied.

Owing to the fact that all the waiters, under the watchful eye of their chief, were in the habit of standing in attitudes

of expectant attention, our friends had often been pleased to assume that the vacant chairs held numbers of people in whose welfare they were much interested.

"How well Mrs. Selwin is looking," said Grace, glancing at an empty chair half-way down the room.

"Yes," said Ethel, craning her neck to get a view of the same chair; "her diamonds are lovely, but I'm tired of that green silk. This is the third time she's had it on this week."

"I wish I could get an introduction to that little girl in blue," murmured Jimmy.

"Which one?" asked Ethel quickly.

"Don't look now; she's looking this way," and Jimmy turned his eyes discreetly away from the vacant chair at which he had been staring.

"There comes Mr. Potts," said Stewart, glancing at the doorway. "How I do

dislike that man. He always acts as though he owned this hotel."

"Perhaps he does," suggested Jimmy. "At any rate, I've never seen any more real owner."

"But there is one," said Grace. "We saw him the day we came, but he has never appeared since."

"I wonder if he could have been the man I saw yesterday in the garden," said Jimmy meditatively.

"Was he a big man with a ferocious gray mustache?" asked Grace.

"He was," said Jimmy.

"That's the proprietor," said Grace. "His name is Hurd, but we haven't seen him since that first day."

"Did he say anything when you saw him," asked Ethel, "about having lost a contract?"

"No," replied Grace wonderingly.

"Or that it was cunningly concealed beneath a shingle?"

"I hope the rain will stop by to-morrow," said Jimmy, looking Ethel squarely and unflinchingly in the eye. "It seems to have affected your mind."

"No," interposed Grace, "it isn't the rain. We must expect erratic remarks from one who is cast for the part of Ophelia."

"Now," said Robert, as they left the table, "which comes first, the play or the charity bazaar?"

"I wish the dance came first," said Ethel, humming a waltz.

"It can, just as well," said Stewart.

"No," objected Grace; "we're going to carry it out as we planned it."

"I want to have the thing first where you sell the things for the orphans," said Jimmy engagingly.

"And so we are going to," said Grace. "Come on, everybody, to the charity bazaar."

"Have your tickets ready," said Robert; "there's an awful mob there now."

"Ethel and I don't have to have tickets," said Grace. "We're attendants, and we go in by the side door. Good by. Be sure to come to our booths to buy things."

No sooner were the two young women in their places than the three men entered, each holding an animated conversation with an imaginary partner. Robert walked up to Grace's booth.

"Have you any nice pincushions?" he asked, and turning to his invisible companion he added: "You like pincushions, don't you? Oh, you like blue ones better?" Then to Grace: "Haven't you any blue ones?"

"I am sorry," she said, "I have only pink ones. Everybody is using pink this year."

"Oh, very well," said Robert; "we'll take the pink ones, then. Give me three, please."

"Better make it half a dozen," suggested Grace; "they're so useful, you know—and they're only a dollar apiece."

"Really very cheap," said Robert, as he fumbled vainly in his pocket for his purse.

"How annoying!" he exclaimed. "I haven't a cent with me. I say, Black, lend me some money, will you?"

"Excuse me a moment," said Jimmy, gracefully offering a chair to his imaginary little girl in blue. "How much do you want?" he asked, as he approached Robert.

"Oh, charity bazaars are uncertain, but six dollars will do me for the moment."

"Here's a ten," said Jimmy.

Robert handed the bill to Grace. "Keep the change," he said, after the manner of pleasant buyers of charity pincushions.

Gathering up his purchases and ostentatiously offering his arm to his phantom partner, Robert went over to Ethel's booth, where there was a remarkable display of match-trays of an astonishing similarity of pattern.

"Ah," exclaimed Robert, "are you here to-night, Miss Martin? This is unexpected pleasure. May I present Miss—er—I beg your pardon, I didn't catch your name—ah, yes, Miss Smith, Miss Martin."

"Charmed to meet you," said Ethel; "do you care for match-trays?"

"She's passionately fond of pincushions," said Robert.

"I say," said Stewart, coming with Grace from the booth, "did you really

touch Black for ten? I did, and I've spent half of it here and half with Mrs. Gordon."

"Yes, I did," said Robert, laughing.

"And Mr. Black spent ten dollars here for match-trays," said Ethel.

"Then that's thirty for the orphans," said Stewart.

CHAPTER XVI

JIMMY, seeing Ethel so absorbed in her conversation with Stewart, and apparently quite forgetting his little girl in blue, joined the group at the match-tray booth.

"Have all the folks gone?" he asked.
"Isn't the bazaar about over?"

"Yes," said Grace; "now we're going to have the play. I hope it will make a hit."

"Do you fellows have to have any money to get into the play?" asked Jimmy.

"No," said Grace; "the actors all come in free."

"Am I an actor?"

"Of course you are," said Grace; "you're the leading man."

"Then it's a game of 'follow my leader.' I'm going off to dress."

For fifteen minutes the stage waited. If an audience gathered, it was composed of the same intangible, invisible sort of people that attended the charity bazaar and that sat at the apparently vacant tables in the dining-room.

Into this phantom crowd came Ethel, a dear Ophelia, in her softly draped gown of white mull. On her head there rested a wreath of real roses—great American Beauties, bound with smilax, and showing a bit of a little cluster of forget-me-nots.

Impressed by the size and emptiness of the great room, Ethel unconsciously assumed, as she entered, the air of a tragedy queen.

She saw a moment's glimpse with folded arms when a handsome figure, stepping carefully between the stable lanterns, came toward her and said "Ethel!"

"Jimmy!" she cried. "how you scared me, but you do look so funny!"

"Oh," said Jimmy, taking her hand, "then you do——"

"Do think you look the part? Of course I do; doesn't he, Grace?" and the pretty Ophelia turned a flushed face toward the stately Lady Macbeth, who sailed into the room brandishing her jewelled Spanish dagger, and accompanied by a marvelously attired knight whose elaborate party cloak was slung gracefully from one shoulder.

"I changed my mind," said Robert, "and decided to be Claude Melnotte."

"You're a *lovely* Claude Melnotte," said Ethel with enthusiasm.

"Yes, I am," said Robert; "come on and see me act."

"Me, too," exclaimed Jimmy. "Wait till you see the Wizard wiz!"

James Montgomery Black, some time champion squash-player of the athletic club, the man who held the medal for the high hurdles at Harvard, who had won the single sculls at Henley, and who had appeared before 30,000 people at Berkeley Oval, clad only in crimson trunks and a competent coat of tan, to take his trials in the intercollegiate contests—James Montgomery Black had fallen desperately in love with Ethel Hamilton Martin, a featherweight from Columbus, Ohio, dressed as Ophelia, and wearing a wreath of flowers which he himself had laboriously woven.

But instead of the classic costume of the athlete, ordinarily so impressive, he

wore some oilskins which he had borrowed from Captain Haskins; for a breastplate a tin sign which had been used as an announcement of a breakfast food, and a coal-scuttle turned bottom up for a helmet.

"I am the Wizard of Oz," he said, bowing to Lady Macbeth.

"You certainly look the part," said Claude Melnotte.

The Wizard offered his arm to Lady Macbeth and led the way to the stage. Ophelia and Claude Melnotte followed.

"Splendid audience," said Jimmy, glancing about the empty room.

"Fine," said Robert. "I noticed the S. R. O. sign as I came in the door."

"I have stage fright something awful," said Ethel.

"Nonsense. I'm not a bit afraid," said Grace. "Is it my scene first?"

"Of course," said Jimmy. "Go on. Are you ready?"

"Yes," said Grace.

In accordance with their instructions, the bell-boys drew open the red curtains with a flourish, and Grace stalked out on the stage, such a beautiful and veritable Lady Macbeth that Ethel held her breath in awe. The lines she gave were the real ones, and were spoken with a touch of such true dramatic art that her hearers were thrilled into silence, and Stewart, who had been standing unnoticed in the doorway, applauded.

"Oh, there you are, Hamlet!" cried Ophelia. "I've been waiting for you."

"Sorry to be late, but I couldn't get my inky cloak any sooner."

"My! But you're a stunner!" said Robert, as Hamlet advanced with his best Irving stride.

The Hamlet costume well suited the slender, strong figure of Stewart Havens. The voluminous black draperies flung across his chest assumed classic folds, and the black velvet cap, with its long, curling ostrich plume, sat firmly on his well-poised head.

"What beautiful clothes, and how handsome you do look in them," cried Ethel.

Jimmy rattled his coal-scuttle angrily, and beat furiously upon his breastplate. "Lemme attim! Lemme attim!" he shouted.

"It's your turn, anyway," said Robert. "Go on."

Jimmy went on with a flourish, and Stewart dropped into the place beside Ethel.

As a character impersonator, Jimmy had often made a distinct hit, and now,

spurred by the enthusiasm of the occasion, he fairly outdid himself in clever imitations.

Four people watched him; four people laughed at him; but Jimmy saw only one, and that one had an expression which told him that he was carrying the game too far.

Suddenly Jimmy stopped in the midst of his most celebrated Hasty Pudding parodies. He took the coal-scuttle from his head, and the tin breastplate was laid aside.

This seemed to be part of the play.

Then he stepped to the front of the stage and began to sing:

"Alone upon the housetops to the north
I turn and watch the lightnings in the sky—
The glamour of thy footsteps in the north—
Come back to me, beloved, or I die!"

There was no more applause. The audience sat silent.

Jimmy began the verse again—he had forgotten the others. The first violin of the orchestra had caught the wail of the song—the wonderful old song that Mr. Kipling brought out of the East—and he followed the singer. Jimmy sang the verse once more:

“‘Alone upon the housetops to the north
I turn and watch the lightnings in the sky—
The glamour of thy footsteps in the north—
Come back to me, beloved, or I die!’”

As Jimmy stopped singing, the violin carried the curious eastern air out into the conventional swing of occidental music. The other players fell into the rhythm, until there came rolling out of the harmonies something that even Jimmy had never dreamed was there.

“Jimmy!” exclaimed Grace, “where *did* you get that music?”

“I made it,” said Jimmy.

And this was the theme:

With expression.

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a piano accompaniment (left hand and right hand) and a vocal line (right hand). The piano part is in G major, 4/4 time, and features a steady bass line with chords. The vocal line is in G major, 4/4 time, and features a melody with various note values including eighth and sixteenth notes. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

A - lone up - on the house - top! to the
 Be - low my feet the still be - near is -
 My fath - er's wife is old and hard with

North I turn and watch the light - ning in the
 laid Far far be - low the wea - ry cam - els
 years The drudge of all my fath - er's house am

thy The glam - our of thy foot - steps in the
 me The cam - els and the cap - tions of the
 I My bread is sor - row and my drink is

Worth _____ Come back to me be - lov - ed or I
 sold _____ Come back to me be - lov - ed or I
 tears _____ Come back to me be - lov - ed or I

rall. stacc.

die _____
 die _____
 die _____

p. in time *rall. stacc.*

CHAPTER XVII

LATER in the evening the moon broke through the clouds. Stewart and Ethel, on the veranda, invited the inevitable, and the inevitable accepted the invitation.

"I thought you said," remarked Ethel, "that you were going to play Hamlet."

"But I only said it because you said you were going to play Ophelia."

"And so I am, if it isn't too late. Let's go back to the stage now."

" 'All the world's a stage,' " quoted Stewart.

"That isn't Hamlet," said Ethel; "is it?"

"Might as well be. 'How sweet the

moonlight sleeps upon this bank'—that isn't Hamlet either, but it fits the occasion just as well."

"You've quoted twice. It's my turn now."

"I gave you your cue."

"'Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo'!"

"Hamlet, not Romeo."

"It doesn't make any difference what you call yourself, as long as you wear that cap and feather. It's the most becoming thing! You ought always to wear it."

"And you ought always to wear that wreath of red roses. How well you've arranged them."

"Oh, I didn't make it. Mr. Black did it."

"Well, he knows how to sing, anyway."

"Yes," said Ethel.

She leaned against the veranda pillar and gazed out over the lake. Stewart watched her.

"She wore a wreath of roses the night when first we met," quoted Stewart.

"But it isn't the first night that we met," said Ethel, still looking out across the water.

"No," said Stewart, "but it may be the last."

"What do you mean?" said Ethel, turning quickly.

"It is probable that I shall have to go back to New York to-morrow. Would you care—a little?"

"Yes," said Ethel softly, "a very little."

"Really?" said Stewart impulsively, coming a little nearer. "Ethel, do you care?"

Ethel did not speak. She laid her hand

on Stewart's. Together they stood silent, a Hamlet and Ophelia worthy of the exquisite stage-setting provided apparently by Nature in one of her most appreciative moods.

"Do you care?" he repeated. The sable cloak came perilously near the white draperies, and as Hamlet threw his arm around Ophelia the black folds enveloped her.

"Yes," she murmured.

"Ethel, where are you?" called Grace from the doorway.

"We're coming," said Stewart, releasing Ethel.

Robert came out on the veranda. "You two look stunning in those togs," he exclaimed. "You'd better have your photographs taken."

"We will," said Stewart.

"This is our dance, I think," said

Jimmy, crossing the veranda and offering his arm to Ethel.

"I think so, too," said Ethel, pausing only a moment to disentangle the end of her scarf from the buckle of Hamlet's cloak.

Jimmy watched her curiously.

"What is it—a two-step?" she asked.

"Yes; but won't you sit it out instead?"

"Yes; let's sit on the stairs."

"Not on your life!" said Jimmy, and tucking her hand under his arm, he led her straight to the little balcony where he had once found the celebrated contract.

"The young lady seems to be living up to her privileges," said Robert.

"Why shouldn't she, dear?" returned Grace. "Now that the ball is over, let's walk down to the lake."

"Come on, Havens," said Robert; "wait till I get some cigars."

Stewart and Mrs. Gordon started down the path, and Robert soon followed.

Meantime matters were progressing on the balcony. Ethel was seated in a low rocker. Jimmy, with his hands thrust deep in his pockets, was stalking up and down the somewhat limited floor.

"You act like a caged bear," she said.
"Do sit down."

"I feel like a whole menagerie," growled Jimmy.

"Why?" said Ethel sweetly.

"You know well enough why!"

"Do I?"

"Yes, you do. To see you all mixed up with that foolish mackintosh Havens was wearing was enough to make me mad."

"Did it?"

"Yes, it did!"

"Why?"

"Because you had no right to."

"I don't know, Mr. Black, that you have any right to say what rights I have."

"You called me 'Jimmy' once."

"Did I?"

"Yes, you did; and you were sweet enough to wear my flowers, and of course I hoped——"

"Oh, the flowers were beautiful, Mr. Black, and I haven't really thanked you for them."

"You called me 'Jimmy' once."

"And your song——" Ethel's eyes softened. "I didn't know you could sing like that."

"I never could before. But this time I sang to you."

"Did you sing that song to me?"

"Of course I did."

"Jimmy!"

He stooped and deliberately picked her up in his arms.

"Now I shall kiss you," he said.

"Yes?"

"Yes!"

When the Gordons returned later they found Ethel and Jimmy seated on the top step of the veranda, side by side.

"We're engaged!" said Ethel gleefully.

"You scamp!" said Grace.

"Yes; isn't it lovely? Where's Mr. Havens?"

"We've drowned him," said Robert.

While walking with the Gordons, Mr. Havens had received a telegram.

"Just as I expected," said Stewart, reading it. "I have to go to New York in the morning by that early train. Can I do anything for you, Mrs. Gordon?"

"No, thank you," said Grace; "but we're awfully sorry to have you go."

"Oh, I shall be back in a few days. Now I must go and arrange with the Captain to drive me over."

"I will say good by, then," said Grace, holding out her hand, "for I probably shall not see you in the morning."

"Hardly," said Stewart. "I suppose I shall have to leave by daybreak."

He walked briskly back to the hotel, leaving the Gordons to continue their walk alone. After seeing Cap'n Haskins, Stewart collected his papers, packed his bag, and then went in search of Ethel, but the young woman was apparently not to be found in the hotel. With his mind rather preoccupied by his business affairs, Stewart looked into various rooms and on the veranda. It did not occur to him to try the little balcony. In fact, he did not know it was there. "I can write her a note," he thought, "and leave it at the

office." This he did, and dismissed the matter from his mind.

The next morning Grace and Ethel were on the veranda waiting for the others. Jimmy and Robert appeared.

"I wish Mr. Havens would come," said Ethel; "I'm most starved."

"He can't come," said Robert solemnly. "I told you I drowned him."

"Ridiculous!" said Ethel.

"Sure," said Robert. "They're going to drag the lake for him immediately after breakfast."

As they passed through the office on their way to the dining-room the clerk handed Ethel a note. She read it at the table. It ran:

MY DEAR MISS MARTIN:

I have looked all around the hotel for you to tell you that it is necessary for

me to go to New York by the early train. I am dreadfully sorry not to see you before I go, but I shall be away only three or four days, and shall hope to see you on my return.

Very sincerely yours,

STEWART HAVENS.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Ethel, as she folded the note and put it back in its envelope.

"Did he write you after he was drowned?" asked Jimmy, "or before?"

"How did you know who wrote it?"

"That classic script is unmistakable," said Jimmy, glancing at the envelope. "Also, you will please hand it over, as I now have the right to read all your correspondence."

"Hardly that," said Ethel, smiling sweetly at him; "but I will read it to you."

"Do," said Jimmy.

Ethel opened the note again.

"'My Dear,'" she read. "I think that's such a nice way to begin a letter."

"Is that the way it begins?" inquired Jimmy savagely.

"Of course it does. 'My Dear—Miss Martin.'"

Jimmy scowled.

Ethel continued: "'After what happened last evening——'"

"What happened last evening?" growled Jimmy.

"*You* ought to know," said Ethel, beaming at him.

"Yes, and so I do; but how did he know?"

"I told him," said Ethel.

"You did? Pray when did you see him?"

"I got up early to see him off. He left at five o'clock."

"I wondered what you were up to when I heard you going downstairs," said Grace, rising to the occasion.

"When does he say he'll be back?" asked Robert.

Ethel looked at the note again. "He says here," she read, "that he'll be away three or four days, but he wrote this last night. When I saw him this morning he said he thought he'd return tomorrow."

"Good for you, Ethel," said Robert approvingly.

"Is that all there is in that letter?" asked Jimmy.

"All except the—er—signature," said Ethel.

"What is the signature?" and Jimmy scowled again.

"Oh, men do say such ridiculous things at the end of their letters."

"Give me that letter," cried Jimmy, making a dash for it.

Ethel ran out of the room, and Jimmy in pursuit followed her across the lawn and down the path to the lake.

"What a perfect flirt that girl is," said Grace.

"What a lovely liar," said Robert.

CHAPTER XVIII

STEWART returned from New York after a few days, and announced to Robert that he thought the matters connected with the spruce lands were satisfactorily arranged. "I saw Thompson in New York," he explained, "and he believes the railroad company can be brought to terms with but little trouble. I don't yet know what position Mr. Hurd is going to take in the matter. Every time I have talked to him he has been controlled by Aunt Zip—so far as saying anything is concerned. She doesn't speak at all, and he says just as little as possible. I'd like to get them to talk once, and maybe when the railroad attorney gets

up here next week we can arrive at some sort of a conclusion."

"They certainly will have to talk then," said Robert.

"Don't you be too sure of that. They are not certain to do anything at all."

"But our company must acquire these lands," said Robert.

"Certainly they think they must, but really there's no 'must' about it. The 'must' part lies altogether in the hands of Mr. Hurd and his sister. What they say will necessarily have to be a final answer—during the next few years, at least."

Meanwhile, Ethel and Grace Gordon had decided to work out the solution of the mystery themselves. Ethel's detective experience with Jimmy had fired her imagination, and she was of the opinion that there was something to be dis-

covered. Where and when was a question which presented no difficulties to her. She simply knew that with Grace's help it would all come out in a very few minutes—surely before luncheon.

"For of course, Grace," said Ethel, "there must be some reason—some real reason—for this ridiculous hotel being kept the way it is. If we put our minds to it we can find it out, and I want to do it anyway, to get ahead of Jimmy—he thought he was making such beautiful deductions, and they amounted to just nothing. Now we'll show him."

"How do we go about it?" asked Grace.

"Why, we must get it out of the people we know," said Ethel.

"And they are Mr. Hurd, the proprietor, whom we never see; Aunt Zip, who never sees us; and Captain Haskins, of

whom I think we see and hear a great deal too much."

"Just so," said Ethel; "those are the three people who know this mystery. Now I shall make it my business to find out from one or all of them what it's all about."

"Shall we begin now?" said Grace, folding up the shawl she was knitting.

"Yes, right now," said Ethel; "and first we must see Josiah Quincy Hurd."

Grace and Ethel went to the desk and glanced over the register, which contained but five names—since the opening of the season.

The clerk was reading comfortably behind the desk, but at the approach of two ladies he rose and came forward, smiling pleasantly.

"Fine morning, Mrs. Gordon," he said.

.

"We ought to have a fine day after all the rain we had," said Ethel.

"Can you tell us where Mr. Hurd is?" asked Grace. "We want to see him a few minutes."

"Mr. Hurd? Why, yes—let me see, I think he has just stepped out. He was around here this morning—that is, I think he was."

"Then you don't know where he is now?" said Ethel a little impatiently.

"Well, not just at this minute; but I'll send for him—yes, certainly, I'll send for him."

He called a bell-boy and said: "Charles, please tell Mr. Hurd that Mrs. Gordon would like to speak with him a moment."

"Yes, sir," said Charles, who disappeared in the direction of the kitchen.

Grace and Ethel sat down and waited. The clerk returned to his book. After

waiting some time Ethel grew impatient. "Charles doesn't seem to be having much luck in finding Mr. Hurd. We'd better send another boy to look up Charles."

"George," called the clerk, as another boy passed through the hall, "will you go and see if you can find Charles? I sent him after Mr. Hurd some time ago."

"Yes, sir," said George. He, too, disappeared between the swinging doors that led to the regions of the kitchen.

Grace and Ethel went into the dining-room. The porter was moving some of the tables.

"Have you seen Mr. Hurd?" asked Grace.

"Why, yes, ma'am," said the porter; "that is, he went through about an hour ago, so one of the girls said."

"Can't you send for him?" asked Ethel.

"Certainly. I'll go myself, ma'am. Who shall I say wishes to see him, ma'am?"

"Say Mrs. Gordon wants to see him, and ask him please to come at once."

"Goodness, Grace," said Ethel, as the porter disappeared, "now he'll come, and whatever shall we say to him?"

"Why, we'll ask him what we want to know," said Grace stoutly.

"Well, I wish he'd hurry." said Ethel, sitting on the edge of the table and swinging her foot.

After waiting what seemed an interminable time, but which in reality was about five minutes, Grace, who had been watching through the window, said: "Oh, he'll never come here. There's no use sending any more people after him. We'll have to go and find him ourselves."

"Let's go around toward the garden," said Ethel. "He may be there."

They started in the direction of Aunt Zip's domains, but as they came near the gate they met one of the maids. "Have you seen Mr. Hurd this morning?" asked Grace.

"Yes'm," said the maid; "he was walking up the road just a little spell ago."

"Which way?" said Ethel.

"Up toward the corner, over there," and the girl pointed in the direction of the blacksmith's shop.

Over to the blacksmith's shop they went, and the blacksmith said he hadn't seen Mr. Hurd that day, but that he might be around some time late in the afternoon. "I'll send my boy for him," he volunteered. "I'd just 's soon's not."

"For goodness sake don't!" said Ethel; "he will get lost, like all the rest of those

people. There's a string of them out now hunting Mr. Hurd."

They walked away from the blacksmith's shop, and Grace said: "Suppose we try Aunt Zip. I think she might be more promising."

"Yes," said Ethel; "and she knows all about it, too. If we get on the right side of her we'll find out something."

As they approached the garden gate again they heard Aunt Zip talking, evidently to Joseph.

"As I was sayin', Joseph," she said—"as I was sayin', Joseph, if you hadn't showed so much curiosity about what was in that kettle, you wouldn't of got your mouth burned. Curiosity's all right in its place—in museums and such places, but it won't do for dogs nor folks to have too much of the other kind—the kind you've got, Joseph. Folks that have

too much of it usually get their comeuppance, same's you did, Joseph."

Grace looked at Ethel, and without a word they turned and went back to the veranda.

Presently Captain Haskins appeared, and Mrs. Gordon and Ethel went down the steps to meet him as he came up from the landing.

"Good morning, Cap'n Haskins," said Ethel. "You're looking well to-day. Have you seen Mr. Hurd this morning? We would like to speak to him a moment."

"Hain't seen him to-day," replied the Captain, "but I'll go find him an' tell him——"

"Oh, don't!" exclaimed Ethel. "You'll do just as well."

"We've been very much interested to know," said Grace, "why this great big hotel is run in this splendid manner, and

there are so few guests here. It seems spooky—almost as if it were haunted.”

“Mebby ’tis,” said the Captain.

“I haven’t seen any ghosts around,” said Ethel. “I wish I had. I don’t love ghosts much, but they’d be better than nobody. But tell us, Cap’n dear, what it all means.”

“Hain’t ye satisfied with yer rooms? Or the table? If ye ain’t, I’ll go an’ find Mr. Hurd an’ speak to him about it, an’ tell him ye want to see him.”

The Captain walked away and disappeared around the corner of the house, and Ethel remarked: “Now we’ll never see *him* again. He has joined the rest of those vanished messengers. Whatever you do, Grace, never go in search of Mr. Hurd, for he’s one of those bournes from which no traveller returns.”

“Ethel,” said Grace impressively,

“that’s the explanation of the mystery. All of the missing guests of this hotel have gone in search of Mr. Hurd and have never come back!”

CHAPTER XIX

SITTING on the veranda one day directly after luncheon, Ethel announced that she was going sailing alone that afternoon.

Grace remonstrated with her. Robert informed her that she was a foolhardy young thing. Stewart looked grave, and Jimmy declared she wouldn't if he saw her first.

"But I *am* going," said Ethel. "I have always wanted to go sailing in a boat all alone by myself."

"Very well," said Jimmy; "since you put it that way, I'll be ready at six o'clock."

"But I said *alone*."

"Of course we'll be alone."

"Certainly. I shall be alone in the boat, and you can be alone wherever you like," insisted Ethel.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders and said nothing more.

At six o'clock Jimmy came down to the landing and was startled to find that the little catboat was gone from its accustomed place.

"That fool girl has gone and done it, after all," he muttered. He looked anxiously at the sky, and as he saw the gathering of the black clouds which he well knew portended one of the swift mountain storms his heart went queer in a way quite new to Jimmy Black.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed. "Can she really have gone alone!"

Unconsciously his muscles grew tense and his hands clenched as he stared at

the lake, whose glassy surface was already showing the flecks of white that so surely indicated a sudden and dangerous squall. "Of course she hasn't gone," he said; "but if she had—Ethel, dear! I didn't think I cared so much!"

As the darkness increased and Jimmy stood gazing helplessly into the rapidly gathering gloom, the catboat shot out from behind a small wooded island not a quarter of a mile distant. Jimmy caught a glimpse of a girl in a white dress struggling frantically with the unmanageable sheet. As the boat came into fuller view Jimmy saw a squall, swooping under the lee of the island, catch and capsize the little craft. But quick as the squall was, Jimmy had been quicker. His shoes and coat off, he had plunged into the water. In a moment he was swimming with long, even strokes toward

the overturned boat. Catching occasional glimpses of the white-clad figure in the water, Jimmy swam desperately toward the unlucky girl.

As he drew near he shouted: "Hang on! I'm coming!" A few strokes more and he reached the boat. He grasped its side for support and breathed freely for a moment.

This brought him face to face with the young woman, who was also clinging to the upturned keel.

It was not Ethel.

"Can you swim?" asked Jimmy.

"No," said the girl.

"Put your hands on my shoulders, and don't try to help yourself."

The girl did as she was told, and Jimmy soon had her safely landed on the island, which was but a few rods distant.

"Will you please tell me," he said,

"what under the sun you were doing out alone in that boat?"

The girl burst into a fit of nervous crying.

Jimmy saw Captain Haskins from the hotel coming toward the boat landing.

Making a megaphone of his hands, he shouted to the Captain:

"Hullo! Bring a boat and come over here and fetch us!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The storm had passed over as swiftly as it came. The sun shone again, and Ethel, wondering what had become of Jimmy, walked down to the boat landing in search of him.

There she found Captain Haskins unlocking his dory. "Where are you going, Cap'n Haskins?" she said.

"After two fool people," he said.

"What are they doing over there?"

"Dunno."

"How'd they get there?"

"Wreck."

"Who are they?"

"Mr. Black and another woman."

"Oh!" said Ethel.

The Captain rowed out toward the island.

Ethel stood a moment considering the situation. She looked around. By a happy chance Stewart Havens sat alone on the veranda. She went up and sat beside him.

"What an awful blow that was!" said Ethel, settling herself comfortably in the wicker rocker.

"Yes, it almost killed father," said Stewart. "Thought you were going out sailing? It's lucky you didn't."

"Yes, isn't it?"

"Hullo!" exclaimed Stewart. "There's

Cap'n Haskins coming back, and some people are with him. Why, one of them's Jimmy!"

"So it is," said Ethel carelessly. "He must have been out for a sail.

"If he has, he was caught in that squall and upset," said Stewart, "for those people are both soaking wet."

"So they are," said Ethel. "Who is the lady?"

"I don't know," replied Stewart; "let's go down and see."

"No," said Ethel, without moving; "let's stay here. They'll come up."

As the dripping pair came up from the landing the young woman turned into the side path that led toward the kitchen garden. As she passed the corner of the house Ethel exclaimed: "Why, it's Sarah, one of the maids on our floor!"

Then Jimmy came up the steps, and

Stewart rose to meet him, saying: "What in the world have you been up to?"

"Been doing heavy heroic," growled Jimmy.

"You look the part," said Stewart.

Ethel said nothing, but gazed at Jimmy with a most exasperating air of fine indifference.

Jimmy glared at her and went into the house.

Stewart favoured Ethel with a quizzical glance as he sat down beside her.

"Would it be indiscreet to inquire——" he began.

"It certainly would," said Ethel.

Stewart bowed. "I think the storm is all cleared away," he said.

"I don't think so," said Ethel.

"No?" with a slight smile.

"Now don't tease me," said the girl; "please be nice to me, won't you?"

Something in Ethel's eyes made Stewart think that he would. "I'll try," he said, looking at her.

Ethel was satisfied.

As Captain Haskins came shuffling up from the wharf, Stewart called out to him: "Your passengers seemed to be rather moist!"

"Some damp," replied the Captain.

"Were they out sailing?" asked Ethel.

"Must ha' been. Found their bo-at bottom up."

"Where were they?" asked Stewart.

"On th' island."

"Oh!" said Ethel.

The Captain went on toward the stables.

"The storm does seem to have blown over," said Ethel a little nervously.

"I think it has," said Stewart kindly.

"Don't you want to go for a walk?"

They heard Jimmy whistling as he came

down the stairs two at a time, and Ethel, rising, said: "Yes, I'll go; let's hurry."

"Hurry it is," said Stewart, and the pair swung down the steps just as Jimmy appeared in the doorway. Neither looked back. Jimmy's whistle ceased as he heard them laughing.

"I don't see what they think 's so funny about it," he said to himself.

CHAPTER XX

"JOSEPH," said Aunt Zip, as she and the dog were walking toward the kitchen yard—"Joseph, *did* you ever hear of such a performance as that!"

Joseph looked at her inquiringly.

"Why, that girl, you know, that Sarah. She went out on the lake alone in a boat—livin' soul alone in a boat, Joseph—and she don't know no more about sailin' than you do, not a bit more. It does beat all how crazy some folks do get when they get a chance. And that wasn't the worst of it, either; she got upset in the storm, Joseph—upset right in the lake."

Joseph uttered a slight bark.

"I should say as *much*," continued Aunt Zip. "I should *say* as much. I never heard of such a thing, either. She can thank her lucky stars that she ain't right down in the bottom of that lake this minute, gettin' et up by fish, and if it hadn't been for that nice Mr. Black she would of been; and there's a case, as I was a-sayin', Joseph, how crazy some folks can get when they get a chance. He hadn't been in this hotel, Joseph—he hadn't been in this hotel more'n a day and a half before he just went clean plumb crazy over that little girl with the big eyes. You needn't tell me, Joseph—you needn't tell *me*! I ain't never been in love much—at least, not particular—but I know some when I see it, and if I ever see genuine, what you might call all-wool *love*, that boy certainly's got it. They ain't no use in tryin' to deny it, Joseph; you see it

plain as I do, and I'll bet a cookey, Joseph—I'll bet a cookey that if she's as sassy as she looks to me he'll wish that he'd never left his camp and come over to Umbagog House."

Joseph sat down and yawned cavernously. Joseph was always a very tired dog.

"Not but what I'm a-sayin' she's a nice girl, Joseph; I think she is; she's *real* nice. But when any girl's got *too* much ginger in her, it's just the same as cake. Still, I know some people like it that way, and I guess Mr. Black's one of 'em."

Joseph wagged his tail approvingly.

"Now you remember what I say, Joseph—you remember what I say: fallin' in love may be fun, but I've noticed that folks that does mostly goes crazy at first, and some of 'em don't get over it. It's bound to tell on 'em afterward, anyway."

When Stewart and Ethel returned from their walk the others were at dinner.

As they sat down at the table, Robert remarked: "Jimmy, here, has been doing the heavy heroic, he tells us."

"Has he?" said Ethel politely. "I wonder if he won't tell us about it."

"Who was your pretty friend, Jimmy?" asked Stewart. "We saw her as you came up from the wharf."

"I don't know," growled Jimmy, making a vicious jab with his fork. "I never saw her before."

"Oh, yes, you didn't," said Ethel, giggling.

"Of course," jeered Stewart, "you wouldn't take a young lady you'd never seen before out sailing; nobody would. It wouldn't be proper."

"I didn't take her sailing," blurted out Jimmy.

"Oh, yes, you did," said Ethel, shaking her finger at him. "Cap'n Haskins said so."

"But I didn't take her," insisted Jimmy. "I found her in the water——"

"Oh—mermaid?" suggested Stewart, as though he were offering an easy solution of the problem.

"Behave yourself, Ethel," said Grace. "Jimmy's deed was really heroic. He swam ever so far and rescued a young woman from drowning."

"What a lovely romance!" said Ethel. "And she was pretty, too. Of course stories like that can have but one ending."

"Enter girl's father; they kneel; 'Bless you, my children'!" said Stewart melodramatically.

"Lum, tumty *tum*; lum, *tum te tum*," hummed Ethel innocently.

"There, there," said Jimmy; "that

will be about all from you! I will see you after dinner."

"So sorry," said Ethel sweetly; "I have something on for this evening; haven't I, Mr. Havens?"

"You have indeed," said Stewart. "We're going rowing."

"Oh, thank you so much," said Robert. "Grace, do you feel like going?"

"Oh, do go!" cried Ethel; "I think there are two boats. Aren't there—Stewart?"

"I know there are two," said Grace. "Jimmy, will you go with us?"

It was indeed a brave woman who would have asked Jimmy Black anything at that moment.

He looked at her gratefully. "Thank you," he said.

Jimmy insisted on rowing, and before he brought the Gordons back, late in the evening, he had pulled ten good miles—

the length of the lake and back. His usual good-natured cheerfulness was restored—at least, so far as was apparent on the surface.

The two scapegraces, meanwhile, calmly indifferent to Jimmy's perturbation, were having a beautiful time out on the lake, but soon Ethel became silent and sat with her chin in her hand, wondering.

"What's up now?" asked Stewart.

"Nothing," said Ethel.

"You're thinking about Black; you know you are."

"Well, what if I am?"

"It isn't fair. I brought you out here to help you out of a scrape, and you've got to think of me."

"I do think of you—I think a lot of you," said Ethel, almost mechanically.

"I wish you'd say it as if you meant it, then."

"But I don't mean it."

"Can't you be persuaded to mean it?"

"I might," said Ethel, dipping her hand into the water and watching the drops trickle from her fingers.

"Don't do that," said Stewart; "you'll lose your ring."

"You'd get me another one, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, if you'll lose that."

"Then here goes," said Ethel, drawing her engagement ring half off her finger. She paused. Stewart watched her.

"Are you sure you want to?" he asked.

"I'm sure I don't want to," said Ethel, pushing the ring back in its place. "Let's go home," she said.

"Not quite yet," pleaded Stewart.

"Why not?" said Ethel softly.

Stewart deliberately pulled the oars into the boat. He reached for Ethel's

hand and took it in both his own.
"Because I want you to stay right here with me," he said.

"I like to stay," said Ethel.

"Always?"

"Always—'most."

"I wish you knew your own mind two days running," said Stewart.

"I wish I did."

"But I love you just the same." He kissed her hand, but Ethel drew it away.

"Let us go back now," she said.

Without a word, Stewart picked up his oars and rowed back to the hotel.

Left to himself that night, Stewart sat on the veranda smoking. "It won't do," he said to himself. "I must realise that I've got a good deal of work to do before I can marry any one. Ethel Martin is the dearest little girl I ever knew, but she is a flirt just the same. There's no deny-

ing that. The only way to keep out of it is to keep away from her. I'll wait till morning and see if she really took me seriously. Then I'll govern myself accordingly. It's lucky, perhaps, that I've got to close up this spruce land deal pretty soon and get back to New York. I wish before I go I could solve the mystery of this confounded hotel. It's impossible to get anything out of Hurd, and Cap'n Haskins is just as close-mouthed, and what Aunt Zip knows she won't tell. Neither will Joseph; and I don't know how much the railroad company's attorney knows about these deeds for the timber rights, so I don't dare ask him any questions about it."

Grace came out on the veranda. "Have you seen Robert?" she asked.

"No," said Stewart. "Sit down for a minute, won't you?"

Grace sat down.

"I don't know," he began, "how deeply I am involved. You know—Ethel——"

"Yes," interrupted Grace, "I know Ethel."

"Oh, do you?" said Stewart. "I didn't think anybody could. She doesn't seem to know herself."

"She doesn't always," said Grace; "but if I were you I wouldn't place too much dependence on what she may have said to-night. She was piqued, you know, and——"

"Yes, I know," said Stewart; "and I think that is the explanation; still——"

"Well," said Grace, "if you care to know it, and can bear the shock, I will tell you that Jimmy and Ethel are out on the little balcony, and I think that when she comes in Ethel will know her own mind."

CHAPTER XXI

AFTER returning from the row with Stewart on the lake, Ethel went into the house. "Good night," she said softly, as she stood in the doorway.

Stewart held her hand perhaps a moment longer than was necessary. Then he said, "Good night—dear," and stood looking after her as she disappeared down the long hall.

She went directly to her little balcony, and as she stepped out from the brilliantly lighted hall she saw Jimmy sitting there, his elbows on his knees and his hands clasped upon his bowed head.

She walked slowly toward him.

He did not move. She laid her hand

upon his head. "Jimmy—dear!" she said, "I have come back."

"I should think it was time," he said.

"I would have come sooner if I had thought you were waiting for me."

"No, you wouldn't; but I knew you'd come, and so I waited."

"Oh, if I had thought you would have kept on waiting I wouldn't have come quite so soon."

"Oh, you wouldn't? Well, now that you are here, what do you propose to do?"

"Why, make up our quarrel."

"I didn't know that we had quarrelled, and I don't know that I care to make up."

"Oh, very well, then."

She walked to the other end of the balcony.

Jimmy looked up cautiously. Ethel had seated herself on the rail. The moon shone down through her rebellious hair

and made a halo of yellow light about her face. In the wonderful colouring of the night her white-clad figure was silhouetted against the deepest of the sky tones. She leaned back against the pillar. Her hands were clasped nervously in her lap. One foot swung impatiently to and fro. As Jimmy watched, her eyes, which seemed to grow absurdly big, grew suddenly tender, and two big tears rolled down her cheeks.

Jimmy walked slowly toward her. He took her close in his arms.

"Sweetheart," he said, "it's all right."

She did not speak, but she threw her arms around him and, for the first time, kissed him on the lips.

Then she said "Mine!"

The next morning, on her way to breakfast, as Ethel walked through the hall she paused and spoke to Stewart. "You

needn't get that other ring," she said.
"I've decided to keep this one."

Stewart smiled a little wistfully. "Very well," he said, and bowed gravely.

After breakfast, Robert was met by Captain Haskins with a telegram.

"For me?" said Robert, taking it from him.

"Be you Robert Gordon?" asked the Captain.

"Yes; certainly."

"Then this 'ere's consigned to you."

Robert tore open the telegram.

"Grace," he called, "Russell wires that I must be back day after to-morrow. The Kimberly case is up for trial. Can you get ready to go this afternoon?"

"Yes, of course I can get ready; but I don't want to."

"I'm sorry, dear, but I'm afraid we'll have to go."

"For pity's sake," said Ethel, "if you two go what is to become of me?"

"Of course you go with us," said Grace. "You belong to us."

"Where do I come in?" said Jimmy dolefully.

"I shall have to go to-night or to-morrow," said Stewart.

"Good!" exclaimed Grace. "We'll all go down together."

When Captain Haskins returned from his daily trip, driving his celebrated team of racers, he brought with him the attorney for the Foxboro, Umbagog and Pacific Railroad Company.

This gentleman came up to the group gathered on the veranda. "Which one of you is Mr. Havens?" he asked, with a deferential air.


"I am," said Stewart promptly. "What can I do for you?"

"I am John K. Potter, attorney of counsel for the Foxboro, Umbagog and Pacific Railroad. I understand that you are attorney for the Frontier Paper Company, and that you are looking after their interests in these spruce lands. I have come up to discuss this with Mr. Hurd, and we would like to talk the matter over with you."

Stewart and Mr. Potter went in search of Mr. Hurd. They found him in the kitchen with Aunt Zip and Joseph. The matter was explained to him. The Frontier Paper Company had acquired timber rights covering 3,000 acres of valuable spruce lands in which Josiah Quincy Hurd and his family had large property holdings. The Foxboro, Umbagog and Pacific Railroad Company desired to extend their line through these lands, and it was necessary to settle the right of

way, both from the owners of the land and from the paper company. That was Mr. Potter's errand. This was easily accomplished, and Mr. Hurd agreed to meet the attorneys in New York during the following week and sign the necessary contracts.

Just here, though, there came a little hitch. Mr. Hurd explained to Mr. Potter that there had been a previous contract with the railroad company which had been broken by them: they had agreed to maintain a stage line to his hotel, and they also were to deliver fresh vegetables and other supplies as he might require them. This had not been done, and because of the company's failure he had been compelled to keep the establishment up at great expense, and he had sustained a loss of \$20,000 during the season. There had been practically no



guests throughout the year, and he proposed to bring suit against the company for damages to the extent of \$25,000.

Mr. Potter discussed the matter in a low tone with Stewart. "Mr. Hurd," he said, "if you will agree to the new contracts, and agree not to bring this matter into the courts, the Foxboro, Umbagog and Pacific Railroad Company will pay you \$25,000 in cash on the day the papers are signed."

Josiah Quincy Hurd figured a moment.

"Zipporah," he said, "that will bring us out about \$6,000 ahead for the summer."

Aunt Zip looked at Joseph Rodman Payne questioningly.

Joseph wagged his tail, yawned, and lay down with a sigh of relief.

Stewart had listened with intense interest. He was satisfied with the outcome of his mission; and furthermore,

he had heard the explanation of the mystery of Umbagog House.

The entire population of Umbagog House stood that afternoon on the veranda overlooking the lake.

"I'm sorry to go," said Grace; "it is a lovely spot."

"Yes," said Ethel a little absently. She was thinking of the balcony.

Stewart, since the success of his plans, had acquired a new air of business importance. Robert and Jimmy were directing the porters in the disposition of the baggage. Captain Haskins ostentatiously quieted his fretful steeds, Nancy Hanks and Belle Hamlin.

"What nice horses you have, Cap'n Haskins," said Grace.

"Them's racers," said the Captain.

Then the portly figure of Josiah Quincy Hurd appeared in the doorway.

"Mr. Hurd," said Robert, "we have had at Umbagog House two of the pleasantest weeks that we have ever spent. We have enjoyed them immensely, and if you'll have us we'll be glad to come again next year."

"Dee-lighted," said Josiah Quincy—"dee-lighted."

It was a merry party that drove off toward the station.

After she had watched them out of sight, Aunt Zip appeared on the veranda. Joseph followed.

"Joseph," she said, "it would be bad enough—I say it would have been bad enough, Joseph, to have to stay here till September 16th, with only five guests in this house, but it'll be a whole lot worse to stay here without none, won't it, Joseph?"

Joseph did not wag his tail. He walked

to the side gate. Aunt Zip opened it, let him through, went into the garden, and locked the gate behind her.

"Joseph Rodman Payne," she said—"Joseph, we've been neglectin' them chickens all day. We've been neglectin' them all day—scand'lous."

Stewart and Mr. Potter left the party at New York. Robert and Grace, accompanied by Jimmy and Ethel, took the train for their Jersey home.

"I suppose, Grace," said Robert, as he turned his latchkey once again in his own front door, "there's no occasion for us to come home as stealthily as we went away?"

"No. Let's all make all the noise possible. I'm so glad to get home. I wish we had a band."

On the library table Grace found an enthusiastic note of thanks from Mrs.

Carpenter, saying that she had had the loveliest honeymoon that ever was.

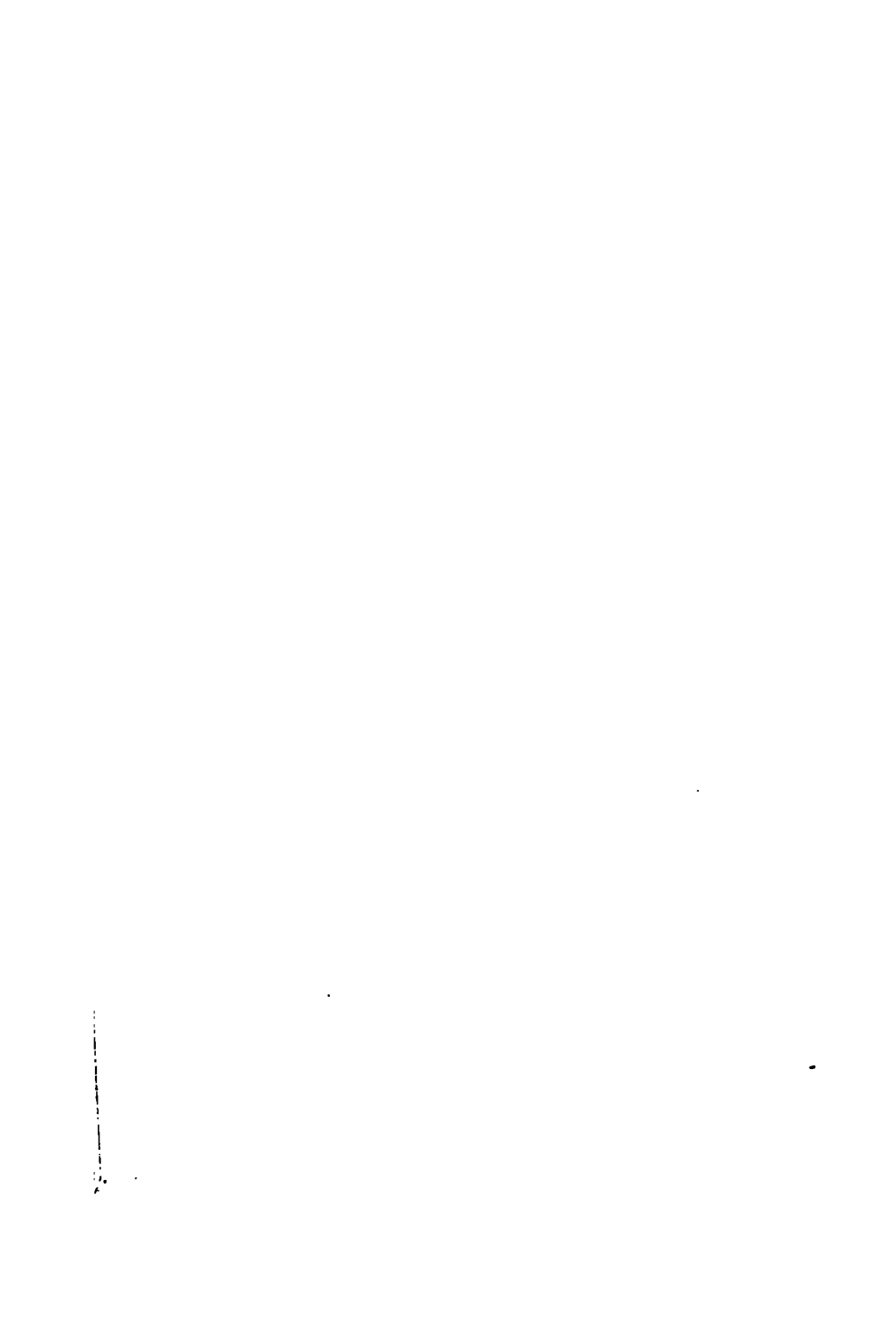
"She's a dear," said Grace, "and I like her very much."

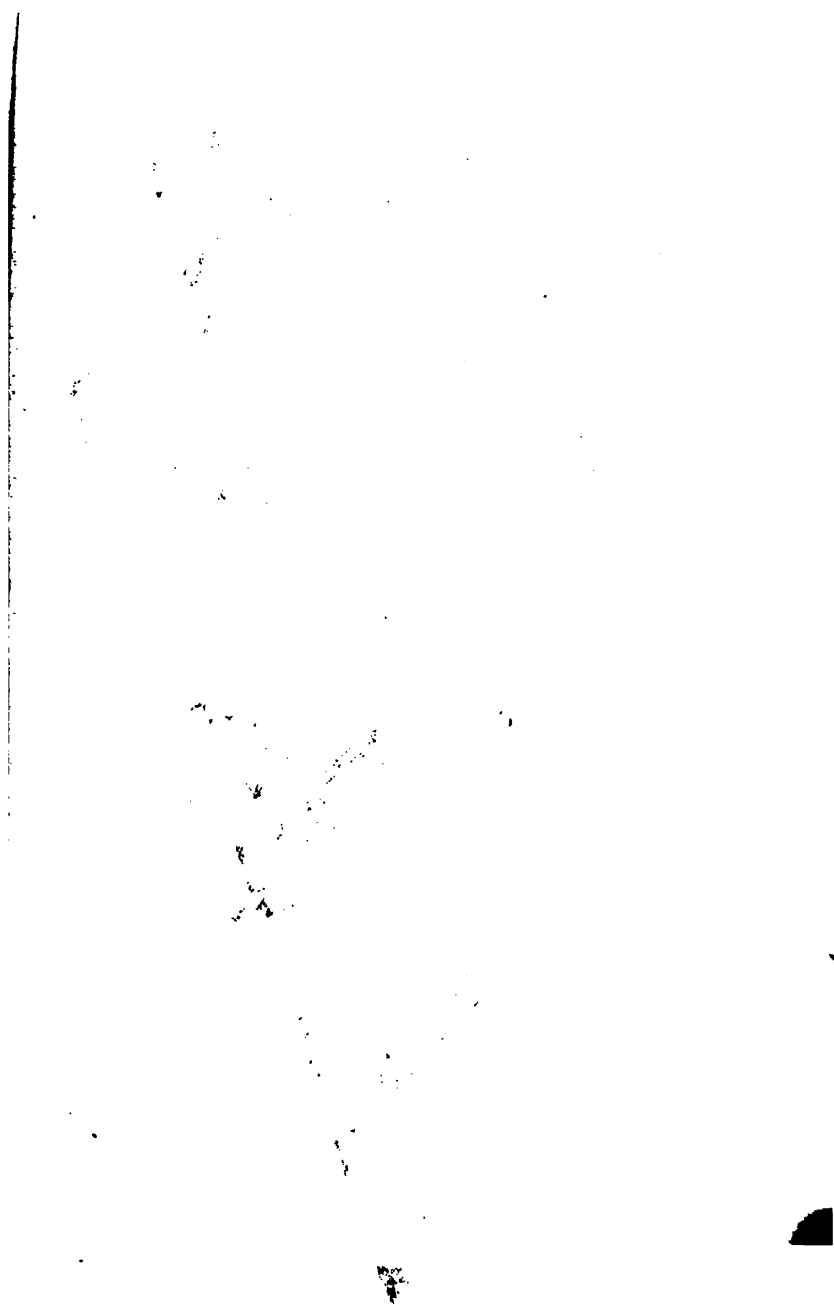
"I say, Mrs. Gordon," said Jimmy, "when Ethel and I have a honeymoon will you go away again?"

"Oh, please do," cried Ethel; "won't you, Grace?"

"Of course we will," said Robert. "We'd be glad to go. Don't you want to elope again, Grace?"

"Yes, dear; any time."





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